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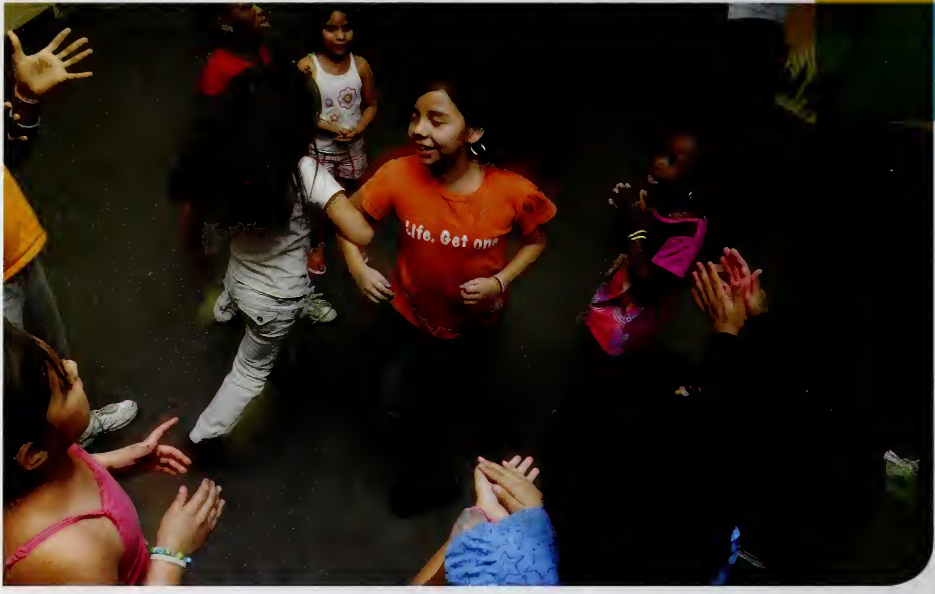
- A section on Mennonite education
- Jesus redefines
- What we do with babies
- Movies (gasp) with female leads
- Conflict is normal

How you can invest in happy homes



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ON THE COVER: Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

**TheMennonite**
January 2013 | Volume 16, Number 1

*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

**Racism continues**

Thank you for the wonderful reflection Everett Thomas did in "It's a Privilege" (November 2012). Thomas did a fine job explaining the Damascus Road program and white privilege. As Thomas mentioned, the Damascus Road training took off in the late 1990s, and those involved did a good job for about 15 years. Now that has slowed down very much for many reasons, and the issues of racism continue.

In my opinion, the issue of racism and white privilege came even more alive with this national election we just had. The issue of privilege continues and, of course, there are a lot of very good privileged people at Mennonite Central Committee. I am happy that someone like Thomas is speaking about it and educating people about issues that the church must deal with. *—Zenebe Abebe, executive director, MCC Great Lakes*

**Compares prolife and Pro-life**

B.J. Miller's letter in the November 2012 issue, "Pro-life is More than Pro-birth," is so relevant that I need to add an amen. Since the election is over, few politicians will ever speak about it again until the next election. Even then it will depend who they think is their base.

I would also like to add that even the dictionary (at least the good ones) give you a different definition if you capitalize a word like prolife and prochoice. One theologian, who I respect very much, asked a politician why—if he was Pro-life—as soon as a child became 18 he could give him/her a gun and say, "Go kill." A reply was never received. In the same way I also am prolife, prochoice and other pros, when it comes to political thought and action. Few Pro-lifers that I know seem to care that over 100,000 children and others die each year in the United States just from lack of good medical care or malnutrition.—*Luke M. Drescher, Harrisonburg, Va.*

**Why different state abbreviations?**

Is there something wrong with listing the correct postal abbreviation for Indiana in your articles, headings and news items? It is IN, not Ind.—*Carl Smeltzer, Harrisonburg, Va.*

**Editor's note:** *Like other magazines, we use the Associated Press Stylebook in our editing and use postal abbreviations only in full addresses.*

**Drone attacks a war crime**

The people of the entire region of Waziristan in northern Pakistan are being terrorized by U.S. drone attacks. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism concludes that drones have killed between 2,562 and 3,325 people, many of whom were civilians, including 176 children. "High-level" targets represent less than 2 percent of total casualties.

Many villages have as many as six drones buzzing around 24/7. Villagers can see them in the daytime and hear their eerie buzzing at night. A report by the Stanford and New York universities says, "The U.S. drone war traumatizes the population and has led people to keep their children home from school and to avoid any large grouping of people, however innocent. … The inhabitants worry that a strike might be directed at them at any moment."

In addition, follow-up drone attacks have targeted rescue workers at the site of a previous attack. This can be nothing less than a war crime. A civilized society would not condone such actions. Shame on all of us.—*Marie Riehl, Lititz, Pa.*

**Communion or complicity?**

On Nov. 6, 2012, many Mennonite churches celebrated Communion in an attempt to bring people of differing political persuasions together into unity in Christ. However, there did not seem to be any serious conversation about the issues of justice, economic disparity, peace, nonviolence and welcoming strangers into our country in that service.

Should we not have first discussed how we can speak out against the injustices of our empire and how to repent of our complicity with the forces of evil and what that repentance should look like? It seemed as though we were reenacting the conduct of the German churches who probably celebrated Communion the Sunday after Kristallnacht and throughout the entire reign of Hitler—without repenting of their complicity.

Hitler slaughtered the Jews. We are slaughtering the Muslims. Would not a better choice for a church-wide service on election night have been a service of repentance in sackcloth and ashes? *—Daniel Riehl, Lititz, Pa.*

**Pastors and social media**

**Editor's note:** *In November 2012, we placed the following message on our Facebook page. It generated many responses. Some excerpts are published here. We invite others to respond as well.*

Associate editor Anna Groff is writing an article on pastors and technology. What do cell phones, email, Facebook, Twitter, etc., mean for pastoral care? What are the advantages? Drawbacks? How does one create boundaries? If you are a church leader or pastor and are open to an interview, please ... send an email to annag@themennonite.org. Thanks.—The Mennonite *Facebook page*

I think people using these forms of communication have created cultures. We have to all become social scientists if we want to remain grounded in personal identity that is contributive in our daily relationships.

I think pastors have a new challenge to care for people who have not differentiated from their medium's or digital identities. I think we will see a psychological diagnosis for people who find their primary way of communicating socially through digital media.—*Scott Hackman*

Last week, a church member included me in a group text, indicating that her father had died. She said it was the easiest way for her to get the word out. One small example. I use Powerpoint in several ways, and I administer the church's Facebook page. FB has been valuable in reaching out to folks who don't attend our church. Many advantages to technology.—*John Cordes*

As a pastor, technology has changed the way I meet and interact with people. I am a big fan of it and think sometimes the church is behind the eight ball when it comes to this.—*Caleb Kaye*

On Sunday, for the first time, I introduced myself to my congregation as "your first social media pastor." Blogging, twitter, Facebook, email—these are staples of the trade for me now. And it effects drastically what and how I do ministry.

We're in need of more dialogue—much more dialogue—on this exact topic. Here in Houston, I know of no pastor who uses it as much as I do, and I'm increasingly asked for tips. We Mennonites are doing it well, thoughtfully, critically—and thanks to our ununderstanding congregations—slowly. *—Marty Troyer*

## IN THIS ISSUE

As happens occasionally—and more often than we expect—a theme emerged in this issue that we did not plan. This time: dealing with conflict.

First, in her article on the need to reimagine seminary training (page 42), Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary president Sara Wenger Shenk says, "The splits our community has often experienced are a tragic fracturing of Christ's body. It is no wonder many people's immediate association with religion—Christian and otherwise—is of conflict."

Second, Many leaders in Mennonite Church USA are attempting to take seriously a resolution passed by delegates at the Columbus 2009 convention asking leaders to address controversies in "creative ways that strengthen relationships," as Hilary Scarsella reports (page 32).

Third, as a result of our board's discussion at its October 2012 meeting, we are also changing our moratorium policy to allow for respectful and edifying discussion of controversial issues (page 56).

The goal is to build bridges between members of Mennonite Church USA who have strong disagreements. Bridge-building is what Robert Kreider (page 12) has been about for the past nine decades, and we are delighted to feature him and his life with our cover story.

As in our January issues in the past, we again publish several articles featuring Mennonite schools and educational leaders (beginning on page 18).

Finally, we again share the names of those who contributed financially to *The Mennonite* during the previous year, and we are grateful for their generous support (page 44). Readers from 911 households, churches and organizations contributed $83,497, a 2.7 percent increase over the prior year.—*Editor*

## Eastern District cuts ties with Germantown Church

SOUDERTON, Pa.—Eastern District Conference (EDC) of Mennonite Church USA has discontinued its liaison relationship with Germantown (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

The decision came by delegate vote at the conference assembly's Nov. 10, 2012, business session in Souderton. EDC executive conference minister Warren Tyson said delegates voted by a one-vote majority to discontinue the relationship.

The liaison relationship was established 10 years ago, when Germantown was removed from EDC over issues of homosexuality.

As part of the transition, an agreement was reached in which the church would continue with more informal ties and the matter would be reviewed by delegate vote every five years.

"We deeply grieve that Germantown Mennonite Church is no longer in dialogue with Eastern District Conference, and we pray for a day when the body will be one," said Germantown pastor Amy Yoder McGloughlin. "We continue to focus on the things we hold in common with the conference and denomination, even as we do what we feel God has called us to—welcoming all people, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability."

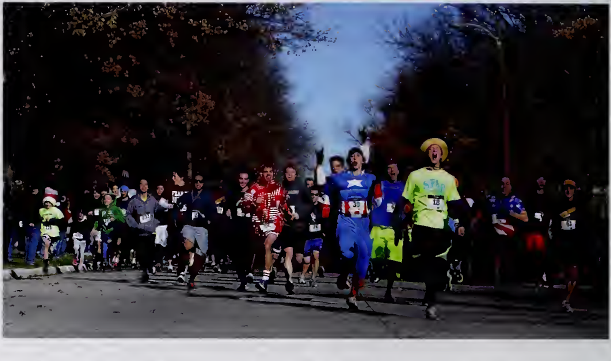
Other aspects of the assembly, including workshops and worship, were held jointly with Franconia Mennonite Conference.—*Mennonite World Review*

## Underpass opens on Goshen campus

GOSHEN, Ind.—Just as the Goshen College campus and city prepared to celebrate the official completion of the Winona Trail Bike and Pedestrian Underpass on Nov. 9, 2012, a train arrived, giving those attending their first reason to put the underpass to use: to get to the ribbon cutting ceremony on the other side of the tracks.

The 10-foot, lit tunnel will allow people on foot or on bike to cross campus even when a train is passing through (or stopped). Steps go down from the walkway between the Good Library and Umble Center to a tunnel and then up on the other side to the Kratz-Miller residence halls and connector, with a "runnel" for bikes to use and a chair lift for disabled people that is activated if a train is present.

The $1.8-million project was financed by a grant to the City of Goshen through the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program, and the college funded the architectural, engineering and planning costs. As much as campus members will benefit from the improvement, it will also serve wider community members who travel through campus on the Winona Bike Trail.—*Goshen College*



## Doing the Howard Hustle at Hesston College

Participants in the 21st annual Howard Hustle Two-Mile Run/Walk start the day-after-Thanksgiving race led by an enthusiastic group of costumed Hesston (Kan.) College students. More than 320 college students, Thanksgiving Weekend guests and local community members completed the route.—*Hesston College*

## MCC addresses domestic abuse in Cambodia

AKRON, Pa.—"Men are gold, women are cloth"—this common Khmer proverb reflects the lowly status women bear in Cambodia, where Women Peacemakers, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner, is working to reduce violence against women.

Women's subservient standing is buttressed by Cambodia's "women's law," chbab srei, which instructs women to quietly serve and obey husbands as masters, said Amanda Talstra, who is MCC Cambodia peace and justice advisor. Although the "law," which is a collection of 125 proverbial maxims, was removed from school curriculum in 2008, it is still a "widely shared cultural value" for women's behavior, especially in rural areas, she says.

In this societal framework, domestic violence is an issue, says Chea Muoy Kry, executive director of Women Peacemakers, an MCC partner. Studies indicate that one in four Cambodian women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, she says. This is similar to the U.S. rate.

Several of MCC's partners address issues of violence in society and strengthen women's ability to support their families, but it is Women Peacemakers that addresses domestic violence directly. The group offers trainings on the rights of women and children in rural areas of Kampong

Cham province in central Cambodia, the province with the second highest rate of violence against women.

Both men and women learn about gender roles, domestic violence, sexual violence, marriage relationships, substance abuse and its effects on women and children. Follow-up training includes instruction on resolving conflicts and communicating without violence.—*MCC*

## Bethel signs nursing agreement with Hesston

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—As Bethel College's online RN-BSN program moves closer to going live, a new agreement will ease the transition for graduates of nearby Hesston College.

On Dec. 6, 2012, Bonnie Sowers, director of Hesston's associate degree in nursing (ADN) program, and Sandra Zerger, Hesston vice president of academics, came to the Bethel campus to sign the agreement along with their counterparts Phyllis Miller, Bethel director of nursing, and Brad Born, vice president for academic affairs.

The agreement "streamlines the process for Hesston ADN graduates entering into Bethel's RN-BSN program," says Rhonda Williams, Bethel RN-BSN coordinator.

She says Hesston nursing graduates are guaranteed admission to Bethel's program as long as they meet the criteria of graduating with an associate degree and a GPA of 2.5 or higher as well as passing the RN licensure exam.

Bethel and Hesston, sister schools within Mennonite Education Agency of Mennonite Church USA, have long had a general articulation agreement to facilitate students transferring from Hesston, a two-year college, to Bethel to complete a four-year degree.

This is the first agreement Bethel has signed with another school that specifically relates to the nursing program.—*Bethel College*

Jim Tolen

## Bethany grad plays for national champions

Femi Hollinger-Janzen, a 2012 graduate of Bethany Mennonite School in Goshen, Ind., controls the ball for Indiana University during its 1-0 win over Georgetown in the national championship soccer match on Dec. 10. When his missionary parents, Lynda and Rod, adopted Femi in Benin, his leg was so deformed that doctors said he couldn't walk without surgery. Instead of surgery, friends among the Benin Christians prayed for his leg to be healed.—*Everett J. Thomas*

## Mennonite radio spots on addictions sent to 13,000 stations across U.S.

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—New public service announcements produced by Menno Media are being mailed by CD or email to 13,000 radio stations across the United States. A grant from Schowalter Foundation helped with funding.

*Never Too Late: Hope for Addictions* is a series of 16, 30-second and two 60-second radio spots that offer encouragement for individuals and families battling drug and alcohol addictions. The spots feature real people telling their stories of pain, addiction, stigma and loss of family and friends.

The spots also address community problems of binge drinking and teenage drinking and driving with Brian Kelley, a psychology professor and researcher at Bridgewater (Va.) College. The spots end with a variety of tags including, "This message from the Mennonite churches," or with available resources from MennoMedia such as websites, and a Close to Home pamphlet, "Dealing with Drug Addiction."

The spots are available at thirdway.com/rad. Churches or community groups interested in the spots aired on a local station can request a free CD of the spots.—*MennoMedia*

## Fund for Peoplehood Education awards grants

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) has announced the recipients of the Fund for Peoplehood Education grants for the 2012–2013 academic year.

- Goshen College received $4,000 for the "strengthening Mennonite colleges as faith mentoring environments" project directed by campus pastor Bob Yoder.
- The Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education office of MEA received $3,000 for the Instituto Bíblico Anabautista tutor retreat.
- The Lancaster, Pa., campus of Eastern Mennonite University received $2,500 for the comprehensive review and revision of the STEP Curriculum, a project led by Mark Wenger, director of pastoral ministries.
- MEA received $2,000 toward online Anabaptist Learning Institute courses, a cooperative project of Mennonite Schools Council and MEA.

The Fund for Peoplehood Education is a donor-restricted term endowment. The fund supports initiatives that promote the distinctive features of church-sponsored education and encourage strong ties between Mennonite Church USA and its schools. Since 1995, its grants have gone to interpretive projects that advocate church-sponsored schools; innovative ways of calling and orienting gifted members to the teaching ministry; orientation programs for teachers, administrators and trustees; and research that enhances church-school relationships.—*MEA*

# Save my son

**Cyneatha Millsaps** is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

*Save My Son* is a new TV show on the cable network TVOne. Dr. Steve Perry, founder and principal of the Capital Preparatory Magnet School, created the program. Dr. Perry is asked by mothers to come into their family and do whatever it takes to save their sons, because the mothers feel they have lost all control and hope. Within three days, Dr. Perry and his "friends," men from all walks of life, come together to wrap themselves around a troubled youth.

The program is special in the fact that it shows men of color supporting one another, their communities and expressing genuine love to our sons. Whether it is a local barber or restaurant owner—or celebrity actors and athletes—we are invited into the stories of young men and can observe their struggles over the last 30 years or more. As the men reach out to help a desolate young man who is lost find his way back home, their own stories open up. The men reveal their past choices and how those choices have affected their lives. Tales of homelessness, poverty, drug abuse, theft, grief and loss, even physical and emotional abuses are revealed.

One by one, the troubled youth are offered a game plan to turn from the current path of destruction and reunite with family and a new community that is willing to support their new life styles.

The program reminds me of the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. A young man by choice ventures out into the world unprepared for what the world offers. He is young, immature and without proper guidance. The young man begins experimenting with things that seem good in the moment—only to realize he is far from anything familiar or the comforts of his life. The young man finds himself in strange and dark places, willing to do anything to survive.

*15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.*

Dr. Perry's program reveals to the community that the road back is paved mostly with shame but also grief, loss, confusion and fear. These young men believe they are no longer loved or question if they were ever loved. Unlike the Prodigal Son, who realized his mistake and went back humbly to his father, many of our sons will need someone to guide them back.

The best part of the biblical story about the Prodigal Son is the response of the father. The young man thought there would be anger, resentment and maybe even punishment for his actions, yet he was met with an overabundance of love. The father was so excited that his son was no longer lost—nothing else mattered. The show *Save My Son* aims at providing an inclusive atmosphere where all returning sons are welcomed and valued.

Unlike the Prodigal Son, who realized his mistake and went back humbly to his father, many of our sons will need someone to guide them back.

*21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.*

This is the way our Father in heaven is with us. No matter how far we stray, God is right there waiting for us to turn around, humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness. And when we do, God provides us with the best he has to offer, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our past no longer matters. The ugliness of our behaviors has been covered by the redemptive powers of our God.

For every young man and woman lost in their own sense of darkness, I pray the power of Christ's community to intervene in their lives so they will experience the love and celebration God has for each of us. TM

# Japanese Mennonites address nuclear power

On Friday, March 11, 2011, an earthquake so powerful that it altered the axis of the earth struck in the Pacific Ocean 40 miles from the coast of Japan. The earthquake, with a magnitude of 9.03, triggered massive tsunami waves of ocean water that struck the Oshika Peninsula with devastating force. When it was over, at least 16,000 people had lost their lives, millions were forced to leave their homes, and property damages were estimated to reach $235 billion.

But the aftershocks of the earthquake and tsunami were felt in other ways as well. Damage from the flooding, combined with human errors, led to level seven meltdowns at three nuclear reactors in the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, which led to still more deaths, the forced evacuation of thousands of additional residents and great uncertainty about the long-term impact of radioactive exposure to humans and the environment.

**The catastrophic events at Fukushima** have prompted an intense conversation among Mennonites in Japan about the future use of nuclear power—and deeper ethical questions about energy consumption, standard of living and environmental responsibility.

The Mennonite presence in Japan has never been large. The majority of the 75 congregations, mostly affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ and Mennonite churches, are concentrated in Kyushu, Yamaguchi, Osaka, Tokyo and Hokkaido. Although some Japanese Mennonites—especially the nationally known poet Yorifumi Yaguchi (see his poem at right)—have been actively engaged in various forms of peace witness, most have traditionally not expressed themselves vocally in the public arena.

**But the 2011 tsunami** and subsequent nuclear catastrophe have prompted some Japanese Mennonites to new forms of action. Already in the spring of 2011, the "tsunami response committee" of the Japanese Mennonite Fellowship was linking Mennonite congregations with individual victims of the Fukushima disaster who needed financial, emotional and spiritual support. More recently, Japanese Mennonites have begun to broaden their witness. For example, in February 2012, Tojo Takanobu, Oshikiri Keisuke and Ishido Mitsuru, all members of the Tokyo Anabaptist Fellowship of Churches, formed the Japan Anabaptist Peace Research Institute—Fukushima Focus (JAPRI FF) to foster theological conversations about the ethics of nuclear power from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. With painful memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still very much alive in Japan, the human and ecological devastation at Fukushima has brought new urgency to such questions. According to Ishido Mitsuru, JAPRI FF is committed to "sharing the tragic experiences in Japan with the global church in order to develop a new form of peace building"—one that can envision a society "that does not depend on nuclear power." The conversations promoted by JAPRI FF are spreading. Last September, the Mennonite congregation in Hiroshima hosted a seminar on nuclear power. Last November, 30 people representing nine Mennonite congregations attended a similar gathering at the Obhihiro church in Hokkaido that brought together scientific research and theological insights with a call for greater political engagement to work for a nuclear-free society. In these and other settings Japanese Mennonites are consciously wrestling with theological understandings of technology and the related questions of corporate profits, personal energy consumption and the Christian's relationship to the natural world.

**These conversations are taking place** within a much broader, sometimes divisive, national debate in Japanese society: Is it thinkable that a country with limited natural resources could wean itself from a dependence on nuclear energy? What changes in lifestyle would such a decision entail? The deeper issues extend far beyond Japan. Throughout the ages, Christians have wrestled with the mystery of God's role in earthquakes, tsunamis and other natural disasters. But in questions regarding energy production and consumption, we all are making choices every day, with consequences that are truly global in scope. In a recent email, Mitsuko Yaguchi, wife of the poet Yorifumi, spoke on behalf of other Japanese Mennonites when she wrote: "We would like to know what the Mennonites in North America think about nuclear power or alternative sources of energy."

How would you or your congregation respond to that question? Do we know the source of the electrical power that supplies our homes and churches? What responsibility do we bear for the long-term energy policies of our country? Could we imagine a future without nuclear power? TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Our country
is a leaf
floating
on the waves
of the earthquakes.

A crowd of
nuclear power
plants
are singing
and dancing
on it.
—Yorifumi Yaguchi

# Invest in infrastructure now or pay much more later

After every natural disaster, it seems, there is talk about being better prepared for the next one. Yet little usually happens. People often move back to dangerous settings, and U.S. infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

True to form, ideas and promises emerged after Hurricane Sandy devastated much of the East Coast. In his *Newsweek* article "Everyday Armageddon" (Nov.26/Dec. 3, 2012), David Cay Johnston writes: "If we are to avoid the next major catastrophe—and it will come—then we have to start paying the bill now."

Johnston notes that "America spends just 2.4 percent of its economy on infrastructure, compared with 5 percent in Europe."

As New York and New Jersey (among other states) look at rebuilding, their governors and others are calling for a clear strategy. New York mayor Michael Bloomberg says, "You cannot build a skyscraper economy on a foundation designed for a farmhouse; it will collapse under its own weight."

Johnston points out that if we fail to make sufficient investment in infrastructure, we can expect bursting dams after heavy rains, falling highway and railway bridges, sinkholes, massive electrical outages, more flooding, forest (and urban) fires and commutes disrupted for weeks, maybe months, as rail lines, roads and tunnels are rebuilt.

He goes on to suggest 12 projects "where investing corporate and tax dollars would not only pay off now by creating jobs and making the economy more efficient but would save lives while reducing future costs."

Here is a summary of his 12 projects:

**1. Accelerate replacement of natural gas pipelines.** During Sandy, leaking gas fueled hundreds of fires.

**2. Stop AT&T and Verizon from shutting down** the old copper-wire telephone system, the only telecommunications that work when the electric grid goes down and cellphone-tower batteries run out of juice.

**3. Demand that electric utilities replace power poles** as they wear out and maintain equipment, especially changing oils in large transformers before they congeal and stick, to reduce long-term costs.

**4. Increase tree trimming** to prevent downed electrical lines during storms and move more lines underground to make the electric grid more reliable.

**5. Promote smaller grids** instead of the vast multistate grids now being developed that can throw millions of people into darkness because of one mistake or even one fallen limb.

**6. Develop a 10-year plan** to tear down, rebuild or strengthen every dam rated risky by the civil-engineering society.

**7. Replace within a decade** every large water and sewer main past its predicted life, with an emphasis on the largest pipes.

**8. Place big warning signs** on every highway bridge, advising motorists of when the structure should have been rebuilt or replaced and when, if ever, work is scheduled to begin.

**9. Invest in riprap seawalls** that extend perpendicular from the shoreline into the sea. These structures capture drifting sand and build up and maintain sand dunes and the vegetation that holds them in place.

**10. Replace rail lines** running through marshlands with elevated structures. This would limit commuter service disruptions after future storms.

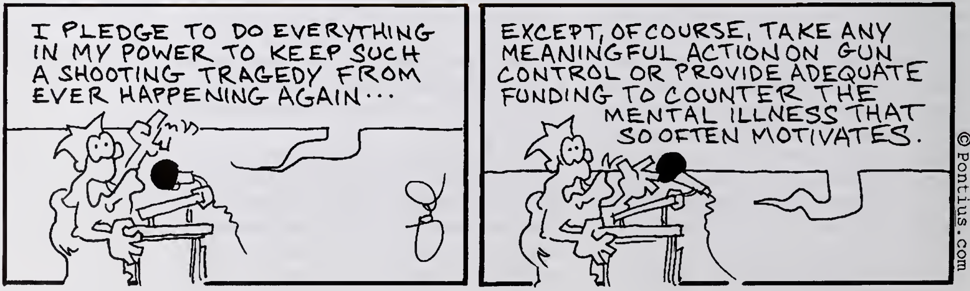
**11. Rebuild marshes** and other natural barriers, like oyster reefs, that absorb the shock of storms.

**12. Require detailed emergency plans** by natural-gas, electric, water and telecommunications utilities as a condition of keeping their licenses.

Prevention is cost-effective.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


I PLEDGE TO DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO KEEP SUCH A SHOOTING TRAGEDY FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN...
EXCEPT, OF COURSE, TAKE ANY MEANINGFUL ACTION ON GUN CONTROL OR PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COUNTER THE MENTAL ILLNESS THAT SO OFTEN MOTIVATES.
© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “It is interesting to me that writing about what one doesn’t believe attracts more attention than what one does.” —Diana Butler Bass, author of *Christianity After Religion*

## Shrug off insults

Some Muslim leaders are saying that the Islamic world needs to learn to shrug off insults made against their religion and Muhammad. One group points to an anecdote in the tradition in which a woman put thorns in Muhammad’s path and threw manure at him when in prayer. Muhammad not only tolerated this tormented woman, he went to visit her when she fell ill. A popular Egyptian blogger has stated that violent protests “were more damaging to Islam’s reputation than a thousand so-called ‘Islam-attacking films.’ ”—*Christian Century*

## The true cost of high school dropouts

Only 70 percent of ninth graders today will get high school diplomas, write Henry M. Levin and Cecilia E. Rouse. “A decade after the No Child Left Behind law mandated efforts to reduce the racial gap, about 80 percent of white and Asian students graduate from high school, compared with only 55 percent of blacks and Hispanics.”

Reducing the current number of dropouts by just half would yield almost 700,000 new graduates a year, they write, and it would more than pay for itself. “Studies show that the typical high school graduate will obtain higher employment and earnings—an astonishing 50 percent to 100 percent increase in lifetime income—and will be less likely to draw on public money for health care and welfare and less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system. Further, because of the increased income, the typical graduate will contribute more in tax revenues over his lifetime than if he’d dropped out.

“When the costs of investment to produce a new graduate are taken into account, there is a return of $1.45 to $3.55 for every dollar of investment, depending upon the educational intervention strategy. Under this estimate, each new graduate confers a net benefit to taxpayers of about $127,000 over the graduate’s lifetime.”—*New York Times*

**104**
prisons in the United States that could house Guantánamo prisoners, according to a congressional study.
—*Newsweek*

## Less cheating among American students

Are American students making the grade when it comes to ethics? A new survey from the Josephson Institute of Ethics finds that the portion of high school students who admit to cheating, lying or stealing dropped in 2012 for the first time in a decade.—*Religion News Service*

### Numbers to ponder

- Jobs created for every $1 million in sales at a grocery co-op: **9.3**
- Jobs created for every $1 million in sales at a conventional grocery store: **5.8**
- Megawatts of wind energy on the U.S. grid in 2012: **50,000**
- American homes that 50,000 megawatts can power: **13 million**
- Years it took for America’s wind power to double from 25,000 megawatts: **4**
- Rank of U.S. 10th graders in alcohol and tobacco use, compared with peers in 36 European countries: **36**
- Rank of U.S. 10th graders in marijuana use, compared with peers in 36 European countries: **3**
- Rank of U.S. 10th graders in use of illegal drugs other than marijuana: **1**

—*Yes! Magazine*

## Kenyan church leaders oppose bills

Kenyan church leaders are lining up in opposition to proposed new marriage bills, which they say will weaken marriage by allowing cohabitating couples to register as married. One bill would bring Christian, Hindu, Muslim, civil and customary marriages under one law, and another would give spouses and children more rights to property.—*Religion News Service*

## Islamic Relief USA named top nonprofit

Islamic Relief USA has received a 2012 Top-Rated Award by Great Nonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews about nonprofit organizations. The 2012 Top-Rated Nonprofit List was based on the large number of positive reviews that IRUSA received—reviews written by volunteers, donors and clients.—*IRUSA*

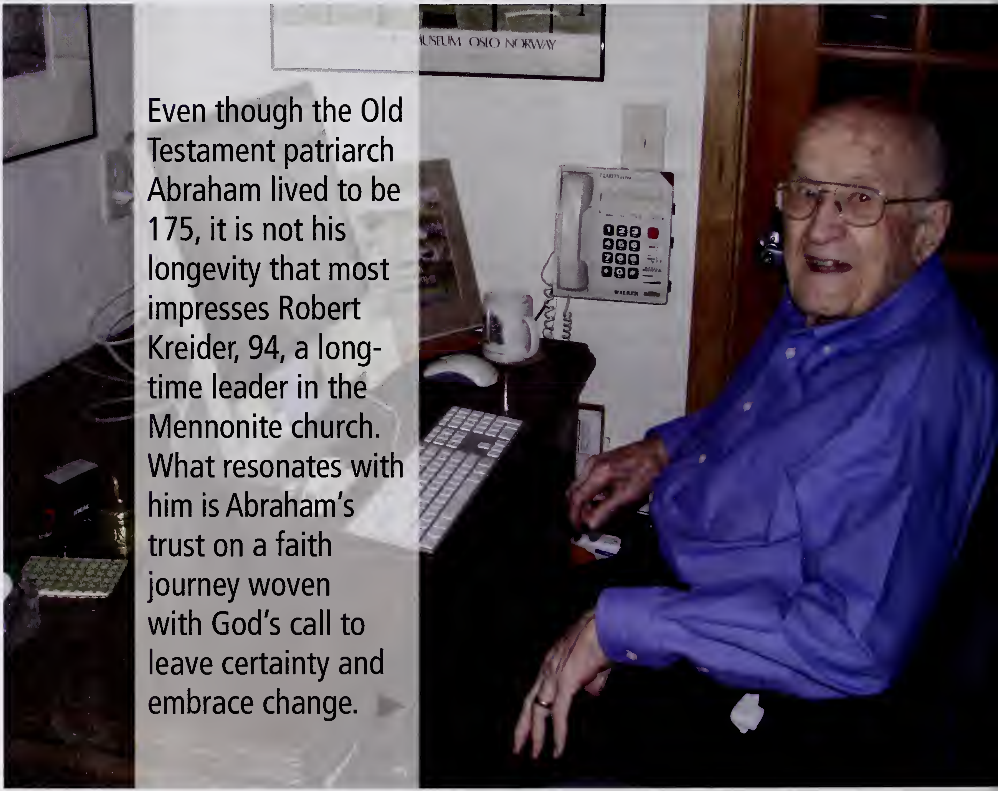
Average tax rate paid by all households in 2009: **17.4 percent**
Average tax rate paid by all households in 2007: **19.9 percent**
30-year average tax rate paid by all households before 2009: **21 percent**
—*Congressional Budget Office*

# A patriarch's pilgrimage

**Robert Kreider helped shape the 20th-century Mennonite church.**

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Even though the Old Testament patriarch Abraham lived to be 175, it is not his longevity that most impresses Robert Kreider, 94, a long-time leader in the Mennonite church. What resonates with him is Abraham's trust on a faith journey woven with God's call to leave certainty and embrace change. ▶



Robert Kreider at his computer at home. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

The New Testament journey motif of walking in the footsteps of Jesus—marked by exploring questions more than expounding answers—is one that Kreider, who lives with Lois (Sommer), his wife of 67 years, in North Newton, Kan., has always valued. This spirit sustained him on a pilgrimage that led through the heart of the Mennonite story of the 20th century, when he served the church in education, administration and church leadership in the 1940s through the 1990s. In those decades, he and his peers grappled with the creep of urban influence into their largely-rural-based church, practiced nonresistance in a world gone to war and sought to navigate modernity while holding fast to their values of community, simplicity and discipleship.

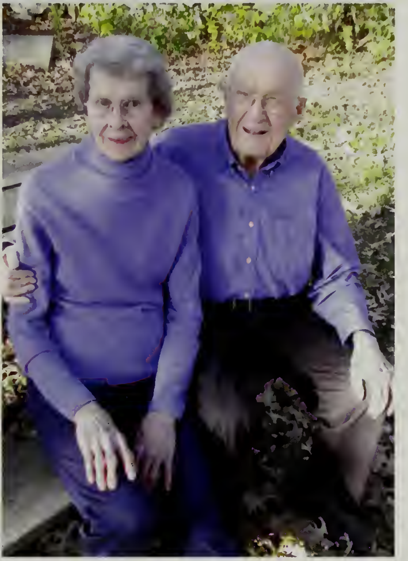
One of few peers still alive in the 21st century to share stories of those times, Kreider, a teacher invited to share wisdom, is also a student, eager to learn more. God's vast universe, which has evoked responses of resilient humility through 10 decades, is still presenting Kreider with new mysteries and questions.

A central motif for Kreider is seeking to live with the mind and spirit of Christ. "My responses about faith have been less on the side of the theological than they have been on the side of theological motifs," he said during an interview at their apartment connected to the multigenerational home of son David, daughter-in-law Heidi Regier Kreider and grandsons Ben and Mark.

"One of those motifs is the story of walking in the footsteps of someone like Abraham, who when God called him, left the safety of the known for the risk of the unknown. A favored story in this motif is the one about the disciples walking with the stranger on the road to Emmaus.

"These stories tell us something about living in the faith, rather than needing to have it all figured out. ... There is always an outer edge beyond us. And in my latter days, my journey is still filled with wonder. I live in awe and appreciation."

His verve for joyful wonder in his twilight years witnesses to how his decades of fruitful service seeded his spirit for today's reflections. His ministries included directing education programs and mental health units in Civilian Public Service (alternative service in World War II) as well as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) relief work in postwar Germany and Europe. He earned master's and doctoral degrees in history and taught history at Bluffton (Ohio) College (now University) (1952-1974), where he also served as dean and president. He later taught at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., (1974-1985).


Lois (Sommer) and Robert Kreider Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

He served as recording secretary for Mennonite World Conference and traveled overseas on its behalf, and he served on the Executive Committee of MCC. In 1961-62 he helped establish in Africa the MCC Teacher's Abroad Program, a program leading to 1,000 volunteers, and assisted Atlee Beechy in the beginnings of China Educational Exchange. He curated the Mirror of the Martyrs exhibit, which has itinerated to more than 70 venues in the United States and Canada, led scores of Mennonite history tours throughout south central Kansas, and authored many books and articles.

> There is always an outer edge beyond us. And in my latter days, my journey is still filled with wonder. I live in awe and appreciation.
> —Robert Kreider

**Building a bridge to common ground**

Awe and appreciation by younger generations surround the story of Kreider and his generation,

Robert Kreider at 10 months in 1919.
Photo provided

who helped to build a bridge from the past to today, says John A. Lapp, executive secretary emeritus of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Kreider's life is a stone in the bridge that has led to the pathway on which Mennonite Church USA now walks.

> Robert was a bridge builder and made sure we heard each other properly when discussing our differences.—John A. Lapp

This stone was shaped by several inter-Mennonite elements, Lapp says. Kreider's ancestors have origins in the former Old Mennonite Church (later called Mennonite Church). His grandfather, J.S. Shoemaker, was a key player in that church through the 1920s, and his father, Amos, was a notable pastor and educator. Robert's childhood and formative years are a bridge between his Old Mennonite roots and the former General Conference Mennonite Church. He has served in roles that criss-crossed the MC-GC worlds that in 2003 merged to create Mennonite Church USA.

"Robert was a bridge builder and made sure we heard each other properly when discussing our differences," Lapp says. "He was a reconciling personality and clearly understood that there are multiple Mennonite traditions. He appreciates the multiplicity and diversity and strives to help all of us find common ground.

"Robert was as close to the center of things as you could get in the 1940s through the 1990s—and he is still with us. If anyone represents Mennonites in the 20th century, it is Robert."

### Leaving old lands for new territories

Kreider was born Jan. 2, 1919, to the farm and pastorate family of the late Amos (Ebersole) and Stella (Shoemaker) Kreider in Sterling, Ill. It was within the safe cocoon of a loving family and congregation—Science Ridge Mennonite Church—that he was nurtured as the eldest child of the family that 19 months later welcomed Gerald into its fold. The family moved to Goshen, Ind., in 1921 so his father could teach at Goshen College. Buffeted by church tensions, the college closed in 1923-1924.

"It was a daunting task for a separatist, top-down Mennonite establishment, most of whose leaders were limited in formal education, to redefine patterns of church life threatened by bewildering changes," Kreider writes in his first autobiography, *My Early Years* (Pandora Press with Herald Press, 2003, $12.95).

His father commuted to teach at Witmarsum Theological Seminary at Bluffton and during the year of Goshen's closing served as pastor at College Mennonite Church in Goshen. The family, remaining Old Mennonite, moved to Bluffton in 1926. With the closing of the seminary in 1931, his father was invited to become pastor at First Mennonite Church. Robert's parents then became General Conference. In 1935, when Robert graduated from high school, the family moved to North Newton, where his father accepted a professorship at Bethel College and where Robert enrolled as a freshman.

"These were all warm and stimulating church experiences in three or four different stages," Kreider says. "Though the Goshen years were full of stress and strain for my father, I still have good memories of our neighborhood on South Eighth Street and our church home at the college.

"When we came to Bluffton, I experienced a fascinating world of Mennonite diversity, a community of Swiss Mennonites sprinkled with families of Russian, Old Mennonite and other ethnic backgrounds. At First Mennonite, there were

The second half of Kreider's autobiography is available from Amazon. He documented the first part of his life (1919-1952) in *My Early Years* (Pandora Press, 2003). *Coming Home* spans 60 years, from 1952-2011.

stained-glass windows, an organ, a bell, German services once a month, a Sunday school orchestra, all kinds of modernity I had not known before."

**Venturing from the Mennonite web into the wider world**

It was this formational web of varied Anabaptist groups that prepared Kreider, who graduated in 1939 from Bethel at 20 with a history degree, to launch into the wider world and church. In 1941, he graduated with a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago. He then was conscripted as a conscientious objector to serve at the Colorado Springs (Colo.) CPS camp, where he was appointed assistant director and educational director, the first such appointments of draftees. In 1942, he began coordinating educational programs for MCC-CPS camps and in 1944 was appointed director of the 26 CPS mental hospital units of MCC.

At war's end in 1945, he and Lois Sommer, a Bluffton graduate in home economics, were married after an eight-month courtship. They served in postwar Europe from 1946 through 1949, where he was director of MCC relief work, first in Germany, then throughout Europe. Lois planned child feeding programs for 5,000 children at Kiel, Germany. Later she served as hostess of the MCC center in Basel, Germany. In that era, the church called young adults like the Kreiders and other couples they worked with in Europe—Atlee and Winifred Beechy and Peter and Elfreda Dyck—into responsible roles.

"It had been expected that the church could get enough pastors and church leaders to staff CPS camps," Robert says, "but the demands were so great … it became necessary to risk with younger, more inexperienced men.

"I remember some reticence on my part, but I never forgot what the late Orie Miller told me when, as a deliberating 22-year-old, I was asked to take a staff appointment. He said, 'When the church asks you to serve, let your answer be yes unless there is a good reason to say no.'

"The Europe years were some of the most intense and shaping of my whole life. In 1946 and 1947, MCC ranked first among private agencies shipping relief supplies to Germany. I recall negotiating with military authorities on behalf of Mennonite refugees stranded in Berlin, going all the way up to the U.S. commanding general in Berlin. … And then to be solidly backed by Akron leadership with ships for emigration, funds and commitment. The way Orie Miller undergirded young people in their 20s and 30s was unique in Mennonite history."

With many others, the Kreiders etched a lasting mark on the Mennonite timeline. But the couple's work was far from done. They began raising a family of five children (their first baby, Ruth Marie, died) as Robert began as history professor at Bluffton in 1952 and completed his doctoral work in history in 1953 at the University of Chicago. During the Bluffton years, the couple forged a strong family life in the midst of Robert's intense responsibilities. Lois kept a steady hand on the rudder of the home life in the house they built on the banks of Riley Creek while maintaining an active role in church and community life.

The Europe years were some of the most intense and shaping of my whole life.—Robert Kreider

In the 1960s, she gave leadership to a Girl Scout troop and annual sales for MCC Self Help. In 1974, she and colleagues launched the Bluffton MCC thrift-Self Help (Ten Thousand Villages) shop—the first in the United States, and when they moved to Kansas, she helped establish a similar shop in Newton. Soon she was traveling for MCC to help establish 100 such shops in the United States and Canada, which in 2011 generated $13 million for MCC.

"Lois' special contribution to our family was her ability to live simply, her tidy sense of economy, her generosity," Robert says. "She worked with limited financial resources to take care of

From left: Amos, Gerald, Robert and Stella Kreider in 1924 Photo provided

Rollin Moser (left) and Robert Kreider at Oakengates in Shropshire, England, at the International Voluntary Service for Peace work camp in 1938.
Photo provided

the children and to host a flow of college guests."

The family experienced a reprieve from the daily grind when in 1970-1971 they traveled as campers for six months around the Mediterranean on Kreider's sabbatical leave. They visited MCC units, lived for a month in Jerusalem, visited Cappadocia, where Lois' mother had been a missionary educator on the eve of World War I, penetrated the Sahara and set foot in 11 countries. The entourage that traveled in a VW bus included the couple and their five children, ranging in age from 9 to 19. It was an adventure of great impact, said son David during the family interview in North Newton last fall. The fourth of five children, his other siblings are, in birth order, Esther, Joan, Karen and Ruth Elinor, his younger sister.

There has always been a sense of leading and naturalness in the context of community.—Lois Kreider

"I'll never forget as a sixth grader seeing the wall in the MCC house in east Jerusalem and the shell marks left in it from the Six-Day War, or standing next to no-man's land, cleared of rubble, on the division between Israel and Jordan," he said.

Robert and Lois moved to North Newton, with their two youngest in 1975, when Robert was invited by Bethel to teach peace studies and direct the Mennonite Library and Archives. In 1978, he became interim dean, then vice president of Bethel in 1984, after he retired from the faculty.

## Reaping riches of community, family in twilight years

In their retirement decades, their schedules have overflowed. Robert has written books, traveled for Mennonite World Conference and MCC, curated museum exhibits, critiqued manuscripts submitted by scholars, taught Sunday school class and engaged in diverse causes. Lois, involved in the MCC gift-shop movement, has volunteered in a variety of church programs.

They took each of their adult children on a major overseas trip with an eye for remote places: the Arctic tundra of Alaska, the southern tip of New Zealand, the Orkney Islands in the North Sea. Even with all the wealth of their experiences, it is the riches of loving relationships they enjoy with their family that they count as most precious, they say. In 1978, they moved to a farmstead with a barn, garden and chickens in North Newton; in 2003, it became a multigenerational household when their son's family moved into the main house and built an apartment for them on the north end.

"We've been incredibly blessed with our children," Robert says. "And now with all the grandchildren, and two great-grandsons, those institutional years dwarf in comparison."

Lois says: "There has been so much that has been providential on our journey. ... There has always been a sense of leading and naturalness in the context of community."

Today this community is filled with people much younger than they who have much to gain from the riches of their lives, says John Sharp, professor of history at Hesston (Kan.) College.

"The Kreiders and their contemporaries are keepers of our corporate memory, and their memory enriches us, informs us, guides us and corrects us—if we pay attention," Sharp says. "Their stories become ours and become useful when we become stewards of that memory. ... A people and a church without a memory is rootless and rudderless, and for that reason, Robert and Lois are such gifts to us."

*Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of* Forever Family.

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Elaine Moyer** has led in both public and private school classrooms, on the athletic field, as department chair and associate athletic director at Bluffton (Ohio) University, as principal of Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., and now as senior director of the Mennonite Education Agency.

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**

Growing up in the 1960s and entering professional life in the 1970s was a privilege. Full leadership for a young woman was possible in Girls Missionary and Service Auxiliary and leadership as a vice president or secretary was possible in Mennonite Youth Fellowship. Women led as Sunday school teachers and head of Women's Missionary and Service Auxiliary. The leadership from within taught me valuable lessons. Both women and men have served as models of servant leadership for me.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**

Just as I have been blessed to have mentors, I seek to encourage others to step into leadership. I recommend *Thriving in Leadership*, a collection of essays from various Christian perspectives, including those who lead from the base of Mennonite/Anabaptist faith. Each chapter is written by senior-level administrative leaders at Christian colleges. See a review at www.mennoniteeducation.org/MEAPortal/Portals/57ad7180-c5e7-49f5-b282-c6475cdb7ee7/Stepping%20Up%20newsletter/2012%2011%20Stepping%20Up.pdf.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**

I see hopeful signs that women are being actively invited to serve on boards, church counsel, in ministry and as administrators. The voice and leadership style that women bring to leadership positions strengthen vision and decision-making. I am encouraged that many boards are noticing that it is essential to have balance of gender and ethnicity at the table.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**

I grew up on a farm with parents who encouraged me to step up and do, learn and lead. I was surprised to enter organized settings where, as a young woman, I was expected to "know my place." We still have too many church and related ministries where Jesus might frown at the system and turn in support of those that systems ignore.

**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**

I face many challenges that require prayer, direct communication and collective, honest discernment. I am most encouraged when people of faith come prepared to stay at the table engage difficult issues and questions. "God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world." My hope is that we will all faithfully seek to live this vision.

We still have too many church and related ministries where Jesus might frown at the system and turn in support of those that systems ignore.
—Elaine Moyer

Students at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., catch up on each other's summer adventures at the beginning of a school year. Clockwise from left, seated: Jenae Janzen, Micah Smith, Ariel Silva, Erin Engle, Cody Claassen, Ben Histand, Claire Unruh and Martin Olsen; standing, Casey Schunn, left, and Cris Nelson. Photo by Vada Snider

# Mennonite higher education

## Expensive for some, though probably not as much as you think, and worth it for all

The first two sentences, set in large font, on the Financial Aid page of Hesston (Kan.) College's website cut right to the chase: "Let's be clear, college is expensive. There's really no way to dance around it." ▶

by Andrew Jenner

Concern over college affordability in the United States is nothing new. The inflation-adjusted average annual cost of tuition, room and board for the country's colleges and universities has more than doubled over the past 30 years, according to the U.S. Department of Education. While the cost of attendance has actually been increasing faster at public universities over the past decade, private institutions are in general still more expensive. The National Center for Education Statistics puts the average annual cost of tuition, room and board at private, not-for-profit American universities at $36,300 for the 2010-2011 academic year.

While the Mennonite Church USA-affiliated colleges and universities aren't quite that pricey, they're not cheap either. According to online "sticker price" figures, the average full cost of attendance this year at the five colleges/universities is $33,714. (The full cost of a 90-credit hour M.Div. degree from the two Mennonite Church USA-affiliated seminaries is currently just over $41,000.)

"Higher education as a whole has had to defend its worth and value in today's society," says Jason Good, director of retention at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va. "We see more and more students making their choice based on price instead of what's a best fit for them."

**When it comes to paying for an education**, however, officials at Mennonite educational institutions note that scholarships and financial aid almost always mean that the actual cost of a student's education will be less than the sticker price.

Dan Koop Liechty, director of admissions at Goshen (Ind.) College, notes that cost and affordability decisions are best made after prospective students have applied, been admitted and received financial assistance packages. At this point, students can make decisions based on the bottom-line cost of their educations, which are often much more comparable to attending a public institution than it first appears.

Directly related to the price of higher education is the issue of student debt, which has also been increasing. According to the Institute for College Access and Success, 2011 graduates who borrowed to finance their educations finished with an average debt load of $26,600. In the aftermath of the Great Recession, some consider this an unreasonable burden to place on graduates entering an uncertain job market. Others characterize it as a reasonable investment—about the cost of a new Toyota Prius—that sets college graduates on the path to a much larger payoff.

"It's not debt that you're using to buy consumables and putting on a credit card with a 21-percent interest rate," says Ron Headings, vice president for enrollment management and marketing at Bluffton (Ohio) University. "It's buying you a college degree."

Headings adds that with prior planning and hard work during college—to maintain academic scholarships as well as earn income—students and their families can find it "fairly easy to get out of Bluffton University debt-free."

**Cost and debt aside**, getting a college degree clearly remains a smart financial investment for young adults. While estimates vary, many sources now place the average increase in earnings over a 40-year career at or near $1 million compared to workers without a college degree.

Engaged faculty invested in students' well-being and emphases on critical thinking and cross-cultural skills prepare them particularly well for the future.

Furthermore, faculty, staff and alumni of the five colleges and universities say a degree from one isn't just any garden-variety bachelor's degree.

"At a larger school, many of the foundational classes are taught by teaching assistants," says Matthew Schmidt, a 1994 graduate of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. "At Bethel you have full professors teaching these same classes."

Schmidt, who lives in Newton, Kan., and is interim director of a clinic providing health services to medically underserved populations, says the small class sizes at Bethel created an interactive environment ideal for collaborative learning.

Additionally, engaged faculty invested in students' well-being and emphases on critical thinking and cross-cultural skills prepare them particularly well for the future. Two of many indications are these:

- From 2006 to 2010, 91 percent of EMU graduates who applied to medical school were accepted, more than double the national acceptance rate of 46 percent.
- At Bethel, 95 percent of social work graduates pass their licensing exams on the first attempt, compared with a national pass rate of 78 percent.

"In a rapidly changing and highly specialized job market, a liberal arts college degree provides an essential foundation for the basic skills that are

▶

needed in a dynamic economic environment," says John D. Roth, the author of *Teaching that Transforms: Why Anabaptist-Mennonite Education Matters* and a professor of history at Goshen College. "So education at Goshen College is 'worth it' for straightforward economic reasons alone."

But the financial case for the value of a Mennonite college, university or seminary education only tells part of the story.

Back on the Hesston College financial aid page: "The key is to think of [education] in terms of value. While the cost of college may initially be a bit of a shock, step back, take a deep breath and think about the experiences and lifelong advantages a Hesston education provides." This appeal to the value of a Mennonite education is an extremely important part of the argument.

Close, caring relationships between students and faculty often are another important aspect of an education at a Mennonite institution.

"As Anabaptists, we are part of a tradition that measures worth in more than monetary terms," says Rachel Swartzendruber Miller, vice president of admissions and financial aid at Hesston. "Mennonite colleges and universities not only offer course credits and degrees, we provide transformational opportunities for our students to fully discover themselves and their place in God's mission in the world."

Hesston College nurses' pinning ceremony during commencement weekend. Photo provided

**Graduates of these schools** frequently point to impossible-to-quantify personal growth as one of the most important parts of their educations there.

"Attending Goshen College was a seminal time in my development," says Peter Eash-Scott, a 1999 graduate, now a stay-at-home dad in Newton "It probably is one of the most influential things that has informed who I am, what I value and who I strive to be."

Spending four years in a learning environment surrounded by people who held similar values, Eash-Scott adds, provided "a safe place to explore my faith and challenge my understanding of God, myself and the faith community," both in and out of the classroom.

Close, caring relationships between students and faculty often are another important aspect of an education at a Mennonite institution.

"The faculty and staff here are part of our community," says Clark Oswald, associate director of admissions at Bethel. "We care for our neighbors. That's something as Mennonites that we learn in church growing up, and at Bethel we do that. ... There's just kind of this underlying sense of 'we're in this together.' "

Michelle Roth-Cline, a 2000 graduate of EMU, called the mentoring role of faculty "absolutely invaluable." Now a pediatric ethicist for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Roth-Cline says her education at EMU prepared her for medical school as well as her classmates coming from Ivy League and other prestigious schools. At the same time, what she learned about building relationships has served her equally well.

"I learned more about how to care for other people at EMU than I did in medical school. Simply knowing how to care for other people in this way has opened all kinds of doors both personally and professionally that I never would have imagined possible when I was choosing a college," Roth-Cline says.

Leah Roeschley, a 2011 graduate of Bluffton, says her education there set the stage for her own spiritual growth. The opportunity to explore Mennonite faith and spirituality, combined with "space to ask questions [and] space to access and receive counsel" allows students to "claim a faith that is truly their own," she says.

"My Mennonite education was worth it because my college experience was bracketed with values that resonated with me," says Roeschley, a registered dietitian in Bloomington, Ill. "Those values were in the background of everything I did at Bluffton. … I left not only fully equipped for the field of dietetics, but I also left with … a deeper understanding of who I was."

**A related role played by Mennonite** higher education is the development of future church leaders and members.

"There is strong and long-standing research that shows that students who graduate from a Mennonite college are far more likely to participate after college in a Mennonite congregation, our denominational service agencies and leadership positions in the denominational structures. Mennonite higher education is not only a great value for students, we are of great value to our denomination," says Koop Liechty, the admissions director at Goshen.

Laura Amstutz, director of admissions at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS), says that study at a Mennonite seminary puts Anabaptist "theology, history, polity and biblical understandings" at the center of the curriculum. At a non-Mennonite school, she adds, these topics—key in the development of church leaders—would often be relegated to electives.

Ron Guengerich, a 1974 graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), says his education gave him a lifelong love of scholarship and the church while bringing the Bible alive as "a challenging and transforming 'word.'" Now the pastor of Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen, he says he left well prepared for work within the church and eager to continue advanced study of the Old Testament.

Given the relatively low pay offered to people entering church leadership and ministry positions, Amstutz says EMS is concerned with the growing cost of attendance and believes all levels of the denomination need to "find ways to help support students financially."

There is also a converse question of worth to consider: What would be the price of not having strong educational institutions?

"It's impossible to put a money value on effective and visionary leadership for the church," says Sara Wenger Shenk, president of AMBS. "Most of us don't get it that healthy communities thrive … because they have compassionate, competent and confident leaders."

"Thank God for those who remember that the cost of ignorance and immaturity given full sway in local congregations is far greater than an investment in those who are ready to become masters of the craft," she says.

The sum of an educational experience at a Mennonite educational institution is greater than its individual parts.

EMU students participating in a Bible study. Photo by Molly Kraybill

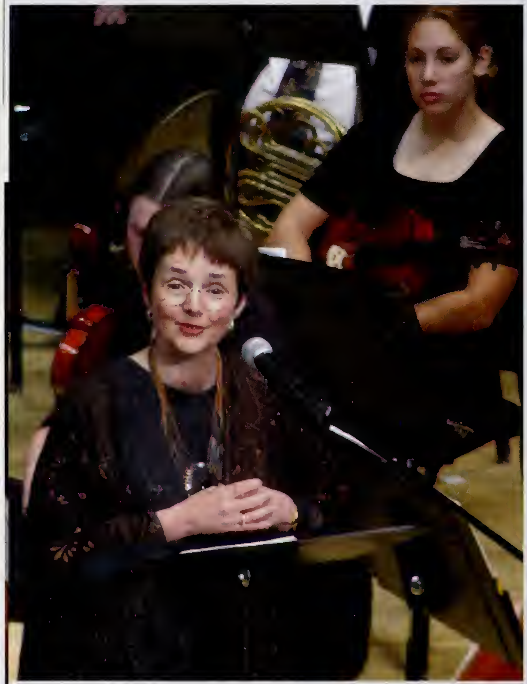
According to those interviewed for this article, the sum of an educational experience at a Mennonite educational institution is greater than its individual parts, with academic growth and personal development building upon and informing each other.

"We feel very strongly about our value and the high quality of education that we provide to our students," says Good, the director of retention at EMU. His statement is echoed by his counterparts at other institutions. "At EMU, students receive an education in which they are challenged to move beyond their comfort zone, to think critically about the world around them, to strengthen their core values and beliefs and to be leaders and forces for change and justice in their communities."

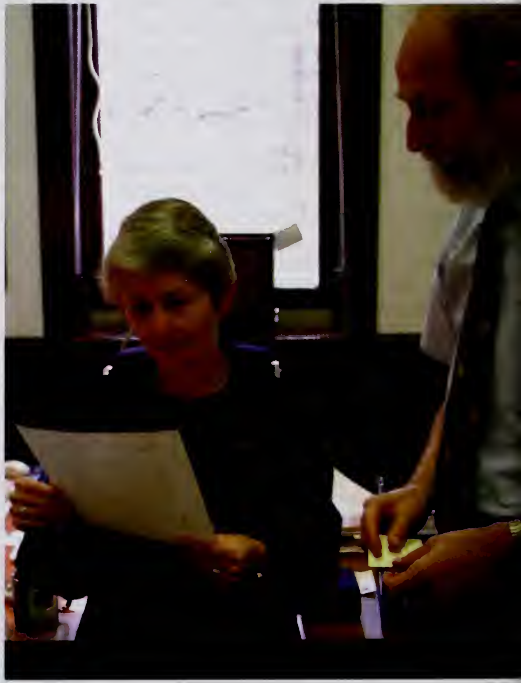
*Andrew Jenner is a free-lance writer in Harrisonburg, Va.*

Sara Wenger Shenk with AMBS student Tony Froese
Photo by Peter Ringenberg

# Profiles of three women presidents
## of Mennonite higher education institutions



Shirley Showalter at the Goshen College Music Center dedication, Fall 2002. Photo by Ryan Miller, GC Public Relations Office



Lee Snyder with John Kampen, dean and vice president of academic affairs at Bluffton University at the time. Photo by Burton Andrews, Bluffton University

Despite encountering the "concrete wall" (impenetrable barriers), "glass ceiling" (invisible barriers) and "labyrinth" (unclear paths), women have made progress in higher education. A 2012 report from the American Council on Education notes that the number of women presidents has increased from 10 percent in 1986 to 26 percent in 2011. The following profiles recount the circuitous paths taken by the women presidents of Mennonite Church USA-affiliated higher education institutions.

# Paths to leadership

by Kerry Strayer

### Shirley Hershey Showalter: building on maternal models

*Goshen College president, 1996-2004*

Shirley Showalter is grateful for the women in her family and the legacies they have given her—a tradition of aspiration, a knack for socializing, a love of reading and a "tremendous maternal love energy." These gifts nurtured and empowered her. She was also blessed with teachers and mentors outside the family. "My high school teachers [saw] in me someone who could succeed as a leader, a professional and a teacher."

She attended Eastern Mennonite College (now University) in Harrisonburg, Va., to pursue a teaching degree in English because she "wanted to be a teacher, … just about the highest pinnacle of career aspiration as far as I was concerned."

After teaching for two years, she and Stuart, her husband, attended graduate school. Once she completed her master's degree, she continued her education. For her dissertation she wrote about the Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Willa Cather and Ellen Glasgow, who struggled to balance the competing desires of love and work. While still writing her dissertation, Goshen (Ind.) College dean John Lapp recruited both Showalters.

At Goshen, she took on new challenges—first as head of continuing studies, then partnering with colleague Judith Davis to write a $1 million Title III grant, and finally shepherding a change in general education. "My only criteria for saying yes or no was: Does it seem interesting? Would I enjoy it? Would I grow as a result of it?"

Showalter credits Goshen for cultivating her unique path to the presidency. The small college context gave her flexibility to mix administrative and teaching tasks. As a pioneering member of the women's studies faculty, the feminist consciousness on campus reinforced her leadership potential.

My high school teachers [saw] in me someone who could succeed as a leader, a professional and a teacher.—Shirley Showalter

In 1980, early in her college career, President Lawrence Burkholder chose her to attend a workshop to meet and be mentored by other college presidents. This fed her inclination to think institutionally and planted the idea of being a college president.

During sabbatical years, she acquired more knowledge and experience—first as a senior fellow for the Association for the Advancement of Higher Education, then as a senior fellow at Valparaiso University. So when she was nominated, she felt prepared.

Showalter has continued to lead and mentor—first as a vice president at the Fetzer Institute and more recently through her writing and home congregation. She hopes for a future where women are given the freedom and encouragement to develop their gifts—much as she did throughout her life.

### Lee Snyder: unexpected opportunities

*Bluffton College (now University) president, 1996-2006*

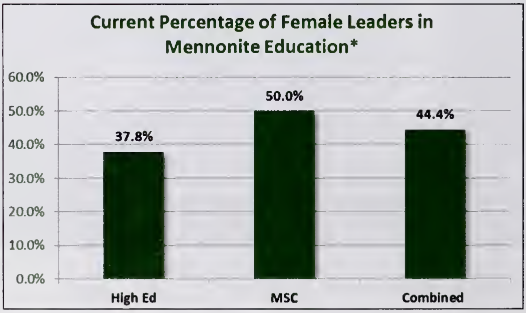
In the beginning, Lee Snyder didn't think of herself as a leader. She grew up in an Amish-Mennonite community in Oregon, where women not only were not leaders but were expected to be silent. But Snyder's father had an interest in education and encouraged in her a love of reading and science.

> Snyder hopes that women in the church get equal opportunity and respect, that they feel empowered to explore their leadership gifts and that they don't feel they have to do it all.

Although an A student, Snyder was still surprised when, after she took an aptitude test at Western Mennonite High School in Salem, Ore., her teacher Bernard Showalter told her she could be a surgeon if she wanted. "It seemed so far-fetched," she says.

After a year of college, she married and pursued the traditional route of home and family. With both daughters in school, she returned to finish her degree at the University of Oregon.

When Del, her husband, was offered a teaching position at Eastern Mennonite College, they moved to Virginia. She attended James Madison University, also in Harrisonburg, and earned a master's degree in literature. Open to new options, she applied for clerical jobs in the registrar's and dean's offices at EMC. "I hadn't yet discovered I was a good administrator," she says.



Provided MEA

Her gifts were soon recognized, though, and she became the assistant to the dean, then assistant dean, which she discovered she loved. She knew intuitively that she needed a doctorate to move on, although her goal wasn't clear.

During her second year of graduate work, EMC President Richard Detweiler contacted her about applying for the dean position. Knowing that a dean could excel and still not satisfy everyone, she was hesitant. When the president called again to tell her that faculty members were advocating for her, she applied.

Completing a term as interim dean and her doctorate after one year, she worked happily as the dean for 12 years, cultivating good working relationships with faculty. When she felt ready for a change, she received inquiries from other institutions. While the timing wasn't right, she says those calls "prepared me to be ready for something else." When Bluffton (Ohio) College (now University) called, she was ready to accept the presidency.

Snyder also served as moderator of the new Mennonite Church USA denomination. During this time, she saw an opportunity to cultivate an up-and-coming leader. She observed James Harder, a member of the Executive Committee, "with growing admiration for his abilities." She persuaded him to come to Bluffton and serve as executive assistant to the president. He was named the next president after Snyder stepped down.

In the epilogue to her memoir, *At Powerline & Diamond Hill: Unexpected Intersections of Life and Work*, Snyder shares a significant email from a friend who prayed "that God will give you the gift of discernment as you are constantly faced with more than you can do."

Snyder has the same hopes for future women leaders: that women in the church get equal opportunity and respect, that they feel empowered to explore their leadership gifts and that they don't feel they have to do it all.

### Sara Wenger Shenk: clear path, surprising destination

*Associated (now Anabaptist) Mennonite Biblical Seminary president, 2010-*

In the Summer 2011 issue of AMBS' *Window*, Sara Wenger Shenk wrote that she was surprised by how much she loved her work as president. Knowing her educational pedigree, others aren't surprised. Her grandfather, A.D. Wenger, was the second president of EMU (1922-1935) and took a progressive stance of advocating for women's education. Parents Chester and Sara Wenger were missionaries in Ethiopia and started several schools. Wenger Shenk herself earned an undergraduate degree in English education. She never taught high school, though; instead, she followed Gerald, her husband, to Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., to pursue further education.

As the second wave of the women's movement peaked, Wenger Shenk found plenty to reflect on regarding what it meant to be a woman. One professor at Fuller—who taught a course that assessed what the Bible had to say about women's roles—especially helped shape her thoughts. Such theological reflections and her experience contrasted with the women's movement, which frequently denigrated homemaking. She wrote her first book, *And Then There Were Three*, about wrestling with the implications of a woman called to be a leader and a mother.

Yet Wenger Shenk didn't perceive herself as a leader until after they moved to Virginia in order for Gerald to teach at EMS. She clearly remembers a comment by EMS Dean George Brunk III: "Sara, you must be a good manager; you're caring for three children, overseeing an addition to your house and teaching part time." He saw something in her that she hadn't seen, named it and encouraged it.

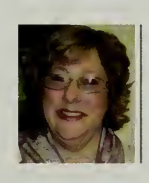
When a half-administrative and half-teaching position opened up, she took it. As part of her training, she worked toward a doctorate in education from Union Theological Seminary. At the same time, Brunk mentored her administrative skills. When Brunk prepared to retire, she was encouraged to apply for the position. She enjoyed her tasks as associate dean, and the dean's role as the public face of the seminary didn't interest her. Instead, she continued as associate dean, working with dean Ervin Stutzman for the next eight years.

When the call from the AMBS Presidential Search Committee came in 2009, Wenger Shenk says it was "out-of-the-blue," since she hadn't pursued the position. While honored to be identified as a candidate, Wenger Shenk was conflicted. She liked her current job and did not want to move or make her husband switch jobs. She informed the committee that she was unlikely to take the job if offered, but they encouraged her to continue the process. After a discussion with Lee Snyder (then interim provost at EMU) and with her husband's support, she interviewed and was offered the job. After extensive prayer, soul-searching and tough conversations, she decided to take it.

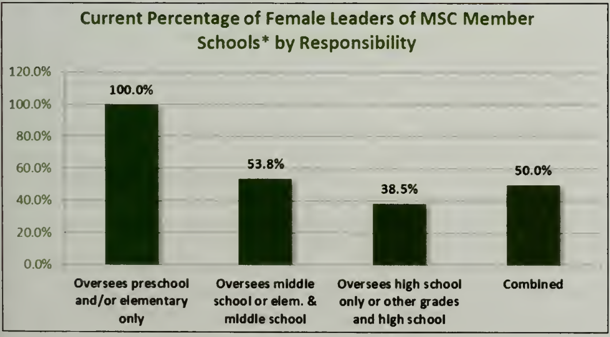
Suddenly I realized that, yes, this is what I'm called to do.—Sara Wenger Shenk

She felt a growing realization that it would be tough to build her own style and priorities at EMS, following two strong leaders for whom she had been seen as a second-in-command. She realized that AMBS would be a new chapter in her life, moving from the internal work of policy and pedagogy, to building the public case for theological education.

"Suddenly I realized that, yes, this is what I'm called to do." At AMBS, Wenger Shenk is practicing her vision of good leadership—"shared mutual regard and collaboration."



*Kerry Strayer is an associate professor of communication at Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio, and a Bluffton (Ohio) University alumna. She taught at Goshen (Ind.) College, took classes at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and attends Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church.*



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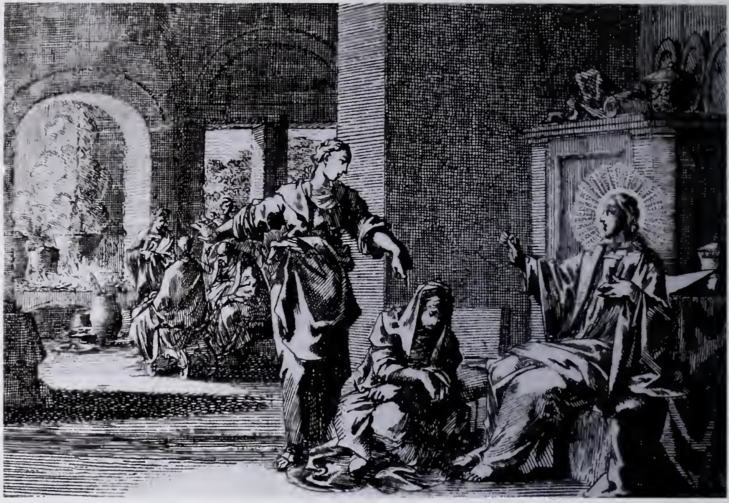


Jan Luyken etching | wikimedia.org

## Lessons from Jesus' interaction with Martha and Mary

# Jesus redefines

by Mary Kennell

This article is about how I experience biblical hospitality expressed by God and fleshed out by Jesus. Our church, Roanoke (Ill.) Mennonite, now emphasizes "recognizing, affirming and utilizing gifts of the Spirit" regardless of gender, but it wasn't always this way. I've been surprised by how much of a difference this has made to me. Now I feel little disconnect between my spiritual home and my church home, and for this I am thankful.

I had what I'd always thought of as a "Martha" week, and later I asked for discussion and feedback from people at my church, wondering who they felt more drawn toward, Martha or Mary. We had a lively discussion, and I was surprised to learn that some yearned to be Mary but felt obligated to be Martha. (See Luke:10:38-42.)

Later, when the pastoral team sat down to brainstorm a list of people whose characters fit the theme of "finding our spiritual home," Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, immediately came to my mind. I'd always thought of this story as a contrast between the doers and the be-ers, or between the task-structured and the contemplative sorts. We can all relate to Martha in that there are times when duties overwhelm, and helping hands are scarce. However, my father always said that behind every action was a good reason, and then there was the real reason. Martha had good reason to complain to Jesus about Mary not helping her. But I question whether it was the real reason.

I thought of this story differently after taking a class on biblical interpretation. In the class, we were told how important it was to understand the culture of the people in the time the Bible was written. As this is a story of two women having a spiritual conversation with Jesus, we'll take a look at how the Jewish culture viewed women.

**In the Jewish patriarchal culture, women**

- were restricted to roles of little or no authority,
- were not allowed to talk to strangers,
- were not allowed to hold property,
- were seen as property—first of their

father's, then their husband's (Exodus 20 and 21); as such, a man could sell his daughter as a slave (Exodus 21:7).

**The society determined their value:**

- A child up to 5 years of age was worth five shekels if a boy and three shekels if a girl (Leviticus 27:6).
- Numbers 30 describes that a vow taken by a man is binding, but a vow taken by a woman can be nullified by her father, or later by her husband.
- Women's value had much to do with their sexuality; they were valued for bearing children but blamed for being temptresses and held responsible for male temptation.
- The Hillel party of Pharisees allowed three grounds for a man to divorce his wife: if she burned his food, talked too loud or he found a more attractive woman. A woman could not divorce her husband.
- And last of my list but significant for our story today: Women were not encouraged to learn the Torah, and in many ways were discouraged because it was thought they could only learn it superficially.

This was the culture for women when Jesus entered the picture. There were cases where women were valued for who they were, but structures are important and say a lot about who we mean to be as a people.

I find it interesting that Jesus didn't seek to modify the feminine role in Jewish culture but seemed to ignore it altogether and modeled a new way for men and women to relate to each other. Such a model speaks loudly to us and must have been shocking to both women and men of his culture and time.

**Here are a few examples of Jesus' interaction with women:**

- In Luke 7, Jesus is invited to the Pharisee Simon's house because he thinks Jesus might just be the Messiah. During the meal, a woman, most likely a prostitute, washes Jesus' feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, kisses his feet and massages his feet with ointment. This scenario would make us uncomfortable. In that culture, it was scandalous. Jesus treats her with respect and forgives her sins.
- In Luke 8, Jesus interacts with and heals a woman who has been "unclean" from bleeding for 12 years. By Jewish law, Jesus was made unclean because she had simply touched his robe. Jesus treats her with respect and blesses her.
- In John 4, Jesus engages in a significant spiritual discussion with an adulterous Samaritan woman. In that culture, there was only one reason a man would be talking to this woman—to arrange a sexual encounter. Jesus' disciples were so shocked, they couldn't even think how to ask the question. And then this woman tells the good news of her encounter with Jesus and thus becomes an evangelist to her community.
- In the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8, Jesus focuses the attention on the men, which was a radical statement about equality.

In each case, Jesus treats women as people of equal value. He does not view them in terms of sexual temptation or gratification. He does not create new categories or rules specifically for them. He approaches them without flattery and does not patronize them. He sees responsible people who are in need of and fully capable of finding their own spiritual homes.

Jesus didn't seek to modify the feminine role in Jewish culture but seemed to ignore it altogether and modeled a new way for men and women to relate to each other.

With this background in mind, the culture's valuation of women vs. Jesus' valuation, let's go back to Luke's account. Jesus was welcomed into the home by Martha. We know he loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and it seems he felt comfortable there. I assume he had other disciples with him, perhaps even some of the 72 that had returned in the beginning of chapter 10. Martha started to think about how she was going to feed everyone, but Mary, caught up in the wonderful teachings of Jesus, sat at his feet and listened, in the posture of a disciple.

Rather than think about what you would do in that situation, think of this story in a different way. Think of the culture of women at this time—Martha in the accepted role and Mary choosing a different one.

Isn't it interesting that Martha went to Jesus and asked her Lord to restore Mary to the defined role of a woman in that culture? I wonder if she resented or was uncomfortable with Mary seeking this bold new territory even more than she wanted someone to help with the many tasks needed to feed a crowd?

The way Martha interrupted Jesus and talked to him tells me she felt comfortable, safe and sure of his friendship. You don't complain to someone you are afraid of or in awe of. She said honestly and transparently, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve all alone?" Family systems theory tells us it is human nature that when someone within a system changes, even for the good, and starts to act out of a well-thought-out position and changes course, it has repercussions within that system. There will be pushback because the act of one person "becoming a self" brings those in close contact up short, makes them uncomfortable. It calls for growth, and they try to get the changing person to come back. I think Martha was trying to enlist Jesus' help in getting Mary to go back.

You cannot be mature spiritually until you are mature emotionally.

**Jesus' response was caring** but not the one she was expecting and hoping for. Instead of sending Mary back to her familiar role, he invites Martha to realize what exactly it is that Mary has chosen and affirms it as a good and healthy choice. He said, "Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things. But only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her."

Jesus does his Jesus thing of turning things inside out and upside down. I think he is saying to Martha: "You are trying to be a good hostess and show me hospitality with food and care, but in the larger picture, Martha, I am the host and offer a different kind of feast, one of spiritual wholeness. Mary has chosen it; it is here for you to take part of also." His radical hospitality is offered with respect and no coercion. It overrides all social, political or religious structures and is grounded in mercy and compassion.

Mary had boldly taken what was offered. She was soaking in this hospitality that serves up wholeness, and it would not be taken away from her. The offer is there for Martha also.

This story ends up being relevant to all—male and female, young and old—because we all face systems that seek to define us, seek to put us in categories and make up special rules for us. Voices telling us we're too old, too young, too shy, too bold, make too many mistakes, are not smart enough, are the wrong color, are from the wrong country and so on. Perhaps we have feelings of helplessness when caught in a system we feel we cannot change, whether it's family, work or community.

**Let's imitate Jesus**, do what he did and turn it inside out and upside down. First, we need to find what is essential, the main course. Just a few verses preceding our story, we have an expert of the law asking Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. Jesus answers, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself."

The essential is the first part. Everything else flows from that. You cannot be mature spiritually until you are mature emotionally. Learn to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. Spend time at the feet of Jesus and let his way of dealing bring us wholeness. Let Jesus define who we are. From this essential relationship we can love our neighbors with the same radical hospitality that Jesus models over and over.

I wonder if this is a way to bring the Martha and Mary in us together instead of seeing them separate, as we tend to. First is the essential sitting at the feet of Jesus (the Mary), then the going out and serving (the Martha).

We are free to relate to people—all kinds of people—without trying either to fix them or be wary of them. Relationships are a lot more fun when we remember who is hosting the party.

This story was pivotal for me accepting new roles in church life. I have and will continue to let Jesus define me, and the only category I accept is that I am a beloved daughter of God, and the only special rule for me is the rule of love for God and neighbor. It is my "spiritual home." Other voices compete, but it's amazing how they become silent when I sit at the feet of Jesus. I am positive that promise is there for all God's children.

*Mary Kennell is on the pastoral team at Roanoke (Ill.) Mennonite Church.*

**These two articles were resourced:**

"Jesus and Women in the Gospel of John" by Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen (1990)

"Mary and Martha: A Story About God's Radical Hospitality" by Liz Dyer (2009)

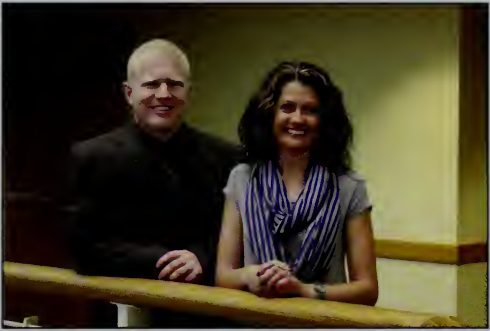
BLUFFTON
UNIVERSITY

# Faculty tell Bluffton's restorative justice story

Mackenzie Mayer says she knew nothing about restorative justice until taking a class as a first-year Bluffton University student taught by Dr. Rudi Kauffman.

"I had no idea what he was talking about," she admits. But now, the senior from Versailles, Ohio, says she realizes what a "unique opportunity" the exposure to the philosophy has provided. And as a resident adviser, Mayer adds, she applies restorative justice techniques to conflicts between roommates in her residence hall.

A book chapter written recently by Kauffman, an assistant professor of restorative justice, and Heather Koontz, an assistant professor of social work at Bluffton, spreads the story of restorative justice at Bluffton to a wider audience. Their chapter on "Preparing Students of Criminal Justice for Restorative Justice Practice" is part of the book, "Restorative Justice Today: Practical Applications."


Dr. Rudi Kauffman, assistant profesor of restorative justice, and Heather Koontz, assistant professor of social work.

Kauffman and Koontz discussed restorative justice education at Bluffton last month during a campus celebration of both the alternative approach to criminal justice and their contribution to the book. Among those joining them were Mayer and Jackie Wells, who, as Bluffton's residence life director, has incorporated a restorative justice option into the university's student conduct system.

"This has increasingly become part of what Bluffton is," said Kauffman, who has gained his restorative justice faculty title since coming to campus in 2008 to teach in the criminal justice program.

In fact, he said, citing former and current faculty in sociology, religion and social work who have also applied the philosophy to their fields, "a big piece of what happens here is restorative justice; we just don't always call it that."

Criminal justice training of future law enforcement officers is vital, but it's not "easily compatible with who we are," and with what many students want to be, at Bluffton, he said.

Along with discovery, respect and service, the university counts community among its four enduring values. At the same time, restorative justice emphasizes restoration of healthy communities and supports reintegration of offenders into the community, while also holding them accountable for the harms they have caused and including victims and their needs in the process.

"We have a different vision" than other criminal justice

continued on page 3

## Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship conference to be held at Bluffton

"Spirituality & Shalom: Living at the Intersection of Faith & Justice," the 2013 Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship conference, will be held Feb. 8-10 at Bluffton University.

Spirituality's role in peacebuilding—and peacebuilding's role in individuals' spiritual lives—is the focus of the conference, an annual gathering of representatives of Mennonite colleges and universities but open to the public as well.

Registration is requested at www.bluffton.edu/icpf/; cost is $30 through Jan. 25, $40 thereafter or $20 for Saturday, Feb. 9, only.

For more information, contact Bluffton's P.E.A.C.E. (Peace Education and Action Community Endeavor) Club at peaceclub@bluffton.edu

BLUFFTON
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# Yoder following passion to pulpit

Anita Hooley Yoder had never considered following in the footsteps of her father, the pastor—now for 27 years—of First Mennonite Church in Canton, Ohio.

But that changed when her first experience with ministry, at a girls' camp, "planted the seed" for her passion to pursue a master of divinity degree through Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

"I gave in to ministry because I continued to be excited about theology questions," said Yoder during a November visit to Bluffton University as part of its minister in residence program. She began working on her divinity degree in 2010 and hopes to graduate this spring.

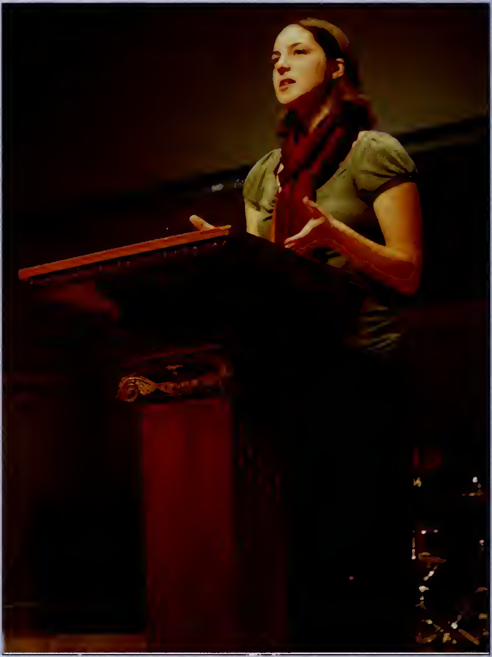
The niece of Dr. Donald Hooley, a Bluffton mathematics professor, Yoder studied English education at Goshen College. But in education, "one thing I ran into is that I couldn't address the kids' spiritual needs, and there is opportunity to do that in ministry," the Cleveland Heights, Ohio, resident said.

Yoder is currently serving a pastoral internship at her church, Friendship Mennonite, in Bedford Heights. She visited The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center at Bluffton to find resources to help her write Sunday school curriculum. The internship also requires her to set a self-care goal, and she chose to hike Ohio's Buckeye Trail for love of the outdoors.

Stephen "Tig" Intagliata, Bluffton's campus pastor, invited Yoder to come as a minister in residence after seeing an article she wrote in The Mennonite magazine. The article included ideas that also became her topic for a campus chapel message, "Blessed Are Those Who Question."

"The implication for me is that we are allowed to question God and wrestle with faith," she said about her message. "There is something there to question and pay attention to in order to grow in faith."

Yoder liked the connection the minister in residence program offered between her church—which wasn't very familiar with Bluffton—and the university. On campus, she also enjoyed the student participation in chapel and in two religion classes she visited. "It's encouraging to see professors and students who are engaged and thinking about which direction to move in," she said.



Anita Hooley Yoder spoke to Bluffton University students at chapel on Nov. 8 as part of Bluffton's minister in residence program. Yoder is currently serving as a pastoral intern at Friendship Mennonite in Bedford Heights, Ohio.

Bluffton's minister in residence program aims to increase dialogue and understanding between the university and Mennonite pastors and church leaders. Pastors speak at the weekly chapel service and meet with students, staff and members of the religion faculty and the President's Cabinet.

For more information on Bluffton's minister in residence program, please contact Intagliata at 419-358-3219.

# Bluffton students place in MEDA contest

Four of the 10 Bluffton University students who attended the 2012 Mennonite Economic Development Associates conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario, teamed to place second among seven competitors in the business case study competition.

Comprising the Bluffton team were seniors Melissa Hostetler of Goshen, Ind.; Jesse Maust of Bay Port, Mich.; and John Oyer of Hesston, Kan., along with junior Ben Roeschley of Graymont, Ill.

The students focused on creating a business plan for Will Winterfeld, owner of Winterfeld Greenbau Construction Co. in Waterloo, Ontario. They applied new marketing and advertising techniques—including a redesign of the business logo—and offered recommendations to improve financial reporting. Evaluating their, and their competitors', work were Winterfeld and three MEDA-affiliated judges.

"The experience helped us apply what we have learned in classes to a real-life situation," Hostetler said.

Speaking about the larger Bluffton group at the conference, Alexia Fox, a sophomore from Berne, Ind., said "we learned how to approach business from a Christian standpoint." Seminars such as "Why Business Matters to God" expanded their knowledge of Christian involvement in building businesses.

Placing second in the business case study competition at the MEDA conference was the Bluffton team of (left to right) Jesse Maust from Pigeon River Mennonite, Pigeon, Mich.; Melissa Hostetler from Waterford Mennonite, Goshen, Ind.; Ben Roeschley from Prairieview Mennonite, Flanagan, Ill.; and John Oyer from Whitestone Mennonite, Hesston, Kan.

A look at MEDA's work over the last year included review of a project in Ukraine for small farmers, who were supported by the organization to compete with bigger farming enterprises. Said Oyer: "It's amazing the amount of work (by MEDA) that goes in, and what comes out."

Campus organizations helping fund the Bluffton students' trip to the conference were the Investment Club and the Pi Delta society. Accompanying them were Dr. George Lehman, Howard Raid professor of business and director of graduate programs in business, and Dr. Jonathan Andreas, assistant professor of economics.

## Restorative Justice, continued from page 1

programs, said Kauffman. And while students entering the Bluffton program want to be respected, they want it "to come from a place of whole relationships," not from carrying a badge and a gun, he explained. That's the core message of what he and Koontz cover in the book, he noted.

Restorative justice enters many social work students' world during field experiences in criminal justice settings, said Koontz, also a Bluffton faculty member since 2008. Those experiences usually begin by identifying the victim, what that person needs and the best solutions. But as students try to understand the situations of everyone involved, they begin to develop empathy for the offender as well as the victim—"an important element in the healing dynamics of restorative justice," she pointed out.

Kauffman has worked with Wells to extend restorative justice principles from the classroom to the student conduct system, where the option of a restorative justice process was added last year. As an alternative to traditional sanctions, the process provides an opportunity for classroom learning to "come alive" for students, Wells said.

In Mayer's case, she hopes to work either in a juvenile detention center or a prison after her upcoming graduation, and to use what she's learned about restorative justice. "I have something different to offer," she said.

# Students add to refugee conversation at MCC UN

Bluffton University students took some experience with the theme to last October's Mennonite Central Committee United Nations Student Seminar, which addressed internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants.

Among the six Bluffton students who attended the 17th annual event in New York City were Shahad Al-Doori and Tamara Al-Sammarraie, former refugees from Iraq.

Al-Sammarraie, a junior at Bluffton, took the opportunity to ask questions about options available to her family members who remain refugees overseas. "They suffer a lot, and people need to be aware of the issue," she said. "We need to find hope and keep the message (of refugees' plight) alive."

Seniors Lauren Faris and Katelyn Brewer worked with migrants and internally displaced persons during their spring 2012 Bluffton cross-cultural experiences in Guatemala and Colombia, respectively.

"We can't do everything the world needs; the world needs everything we can do" was a comment from the seminar that Faris said she found meaningful. The Elida, Ohio, resident added that "it's important to remember it isn't just a political issue, but these are real human beings."

For Christians, said Brewer, from Sandusky, Ohio, "advocacy, prayer and sponsoring as a group are about the most we can do."

Shahad Al-Doori (left) and Tamara Al-Sammarraie

The conference featured speakers from Canada, Germany and elsewhere who discussed advocacy options and also addressed the theme through biblical studies and personal testimonies. It was held Oct. 24-27 at the UN Church Center, across the street from UN headquarters.

Bluffton seniors Samantha Ritter, from Tiffin, Ohio, and Georgia Metz, from Denver, Colo., also attended the conference along with Dr. Walter Paquin, an assistant professor of social work.

Paquin reiterated the global urgency of the theme, noting the recent migration of Iraqis into Syria and, now, of Syrians into Turkey to flee conflicts in their homelands.

Bluffton has sent students to the conference each of its 17 years to raise their awareness and understanding of world issues. Campus organizations helping fund this year's group were Student Senate, the Social Work Club, Women's Council and the Pi Delta society.

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### A newcomer reconsiders baptism

# What we do with babies

sxc.hu

by Jonathan Hiskes

I don't know how many Mennonite churches have allowed a relative newcomer to stand at Sunday morning worship and proclaim the delights of baptizing babies. I do know that Seattle Mennonite Church is an uncommonly gracious collection of people. When my wife and I moved to this drizzly city, knowing no one, they welcomed us warmly. When our son Samuel came screaming and wiggling into the world last summer, they welcomed him, too—and let his beaming, sleep-deprived father say a few words at his dedication.

I told them I was raised in a church that takes infant baptism seriously. The Christian Reformed Church, a Protestant denomination, has just two official sacraments: Communion and baptism.

I like that. I like what it says about the Creator's openhearted affection for his people. Before we can speak a word or take a step, we are wrapped in covenant love symbolized by sprinkled water. (As the parent of a baby boy, I'd be glad for him not to be doing the sprinkling for a change. But that's another matter.)

I picture the father of the Prodigal Son leaping off the front porch and running down the steps to meet his child, embracing the boy before he can even get a word out. A friend of mine says the Bible is often characterized as humanity's long search for God, but it's better understood as God's long search for humanity. God goes looking for Adam and Eve, visits Abraham, picks Moses, chooses David, intrudes on Mary, appears as a baby, calls a band of disciples, goes to the darkest darkness, surprises Mary Magdalene in the garden. And on and on.

**In an American culture** that idolizes our freedom as consumers—choosing personal values, personal spirituality—I like the reminder that boundless mercy, as expressed in Jesus, comes seeking us. We are but to respond in gratitude.

So when we prepared for our son's arrival, I wondered if we should look outside our church home for someone to baptize him. That raised a problem right away, because baptism isn't a service you shop around for and compare prices. They don't have baptism reviews online (actually they may; I'm not sure).

This helped me see one common trait of infant baptism and the infant blessing our church practices: They both derive their meaning not just from God but from the community. Without the congregation, each ritual loses its meaning. The church promises to "share in [the] child's nurture and well-being," as our hymnal puts it. We've already seen that promise kept in the form of dinners, hand-me-downs, kind words and a brilliant hand-made quilt given to Sam at his dedication.

Then I realized another thing the two rituals hold in common: They're not magical acts. They don't change God's attitude toward the child or shift the baby's soul from eternal danger to eternal safety. Rather, they're signs of what we know to be already true about God's enthusiasm for his children.

**It became clear that dedication** matters because of the people watching attentively as our pastor held our wide-eyed, apple-cheeked son and asked if they would help us raise him through sunshine and storm alike. They responded with a resounding, We will, and I knew our family was where we belong.

The fact that Sam is one of many babies, babies-to-come, kids, grownups and seniors only makes it clearer we are called to navigate life together.

Like many in our peculiar congregation in Seattle, my religious roots were planted in different soil. I'm still getting my bearings in the Mennonite church. Adult baptism is a concept I'm only beginning to understand, and I trust its meaning will unfold over time.

Creating a home for a new person—the most bewildering, exhilarating job I've ever found—has made me profoundly grateful for the home this church has offered.

*Jonathan Hiskes attends Seattle Mennonite Church.*

# A time of thanksgiving

**Carlos Romero**, Goshen, Ind.,is executive director of Mennonite Education Agency.

Our educational institutions and programs are making a difference and should have our support.

Recently I participated in a discussion on leadership with other CEOs of nonprofit organizations. Those at my table group talked about the challenges leaders face. They mentioned the recent economic crisis and the shortage of resources; the social, economic and political challenges facing institutions; the loneliness experienced by leaders; and the need to make difficult decisions while not being able to provide all the reasons because of confidentiality and/or appropriateness.

I could relate. In my 25-plus years in denominational leadership, I've experienced many such challenges. But there is a flip side to this discussion. Despite the challenges, leaders can be grateful to be part of an organization committed to making a difference—and for church-related organizations, to be part of an institution created in response to God's call.

While serving at Mennonite Education Agency for the last decade, I've worked closely with many of our educational institutions and have experienced firsthand the critical issues they face. A current trend of college students staying closer to home has ramifications for our Mennonite colleges in regard to where Mennonite population centers are located now and where growth may happen in the future.

**Other significant challenges** are the cost of education vs. what students actually pay, the need to keep up with new technology, and responding to the impact of technology on how education is done. In addition, our educational institutions today are working in a culture of decreased denominational loyalty, decreased trust of institutions, and great uncertainty about the long-term impact of these challenges.

Still, I remain hopeful and thankful for our schools, colleges/universities and seminaries and for their impact on the church and the world in the past and in the present.

I am thankful for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., and their commitment to help train pastors and theological leaders. They are responding to the church's need for new ways of education with innovative programs such as webinars, conferences, short courses, summer institutes and partnerships with area conferences to offer gateway courses.

I am thankful for Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.; Bluffton (Ohio) University, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.; Goshen (Ind.) College and Hesston (Kan.) College, which are committed to academic excellence and to providing a setting for students' individual transformation. The education at these colleges has Jesus as its foundation while engaging students' minds and hearts from an Anabaptist perspective.

**I am thankful for the member schools** of the Mennonite Schools Council and for the five distinctives that make up their mission and focus: challenging youth to educational excellence, nurturing a Christ-centered vision within them, building a community, promoting opportunities and calling students to a life of peace and service. May I suggest that we claim these values for ourselves as we respond to God's missional call?

I am thankful for the Mennonite Early Childhood Network, which was created to provide information and support for parents and educators of children from birth through kindergarten. MECN maintains an interactive website; offers information and support to parents, caregivers, teachers and church leaders; sends email alerts that highlight available resources and relevant news items and encourages networking among its members.

I am thankful for the office of Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education. Its programs include Instituto Bíblico Anabautista and Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano, which promote theological and biblical training of Spanish-speaking leaders who will serve Mennonite Church USA. I am also thankful for the Lark Leadership Scholarship, a program of the African-American Mennonite Association that provides financial assistance to students in AAMA-related churches, and the Native Education and Training program, which is associated with Native Mennonite Ministries and offers scholarships to Native Americans relating to Mennonite Church USA congregations.

**Some people are naturally inclined** to focus on challenges. I encourage us to focus on the things for which to be thankful. Our educational institutions and programs are making a difference and should have our support. As I have said many times, Mennonite education is such a valuable gift; why would we not want to share it with the world? TM

# The confession of faith and marriage

Many in Mennonite Church USA understand the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* to provide a clear basis for a negative view of intimate same-sex relationships. This is not surprising, since denominational statements cite it as doing so. However, a careful reading of the CofF itself raises questions of such an assumption.

The term "teaching position" came into prominence with the publication of the "Membership Guidelines for the Formation of the Mennonite Church USA" in 2001. Section III focused on "issues related to homosexuality and membership" and affirmed the CofF, quoting its statement: "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" (Article 19).

**The Confession of Faith on marriage**

This citation, quoted without explanation, gives the impression that the CofF provides clear teaching against homosexuality. However, the actual CofF does not in fact mention homosexuality.

Article 19 addresses "Family, Singleness and Marriage." At the end of the sentence quoted above, a footnote refers to two biblical texts.

The first text is Mark 10:9: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." This verse is part of Jesus' teaching on divorce (in Mark, Jesus rejects divorce without qualification) and remarriage (which Jesus names as adultery, i.e., "sin" [Mark 10:11-12]). The CofF cites Mark's version of Jesus' teaching; it does not cite the slightly more relaxed account in Matthew 19:9 that does allow for divorce in the case of the infidelity of the partner.

The second text is 1 Corinthians 7:10-11: "To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife." The CofF ends the citation at verse 11 and does not include the "exception" of an unbeliever leaving a believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15).

As this footnote shows, Article 19 focuses on the permanence of marriage and the sinfulness of divorce and remarriage. Not only does it not speak directly of homosexuality, the one place that may allude to homosexuality (the definition of marriage as "one man, one woman, for life") has in mind a different issue—divorce and remarriage.

In addition, the commentary on this article speaks to divorce and says nothing about homosexuality. "Today's church needs to uphold the permanency of marriage and help couples in conflict move toward reconciliation. At the same time, the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings. The church is to bring strength and healing to individuals and families" (emphasis added).

**Pastoral concern in the CofF**

The commentary and Scripture citations make it clear that the quoted sentence from Article 19 of the CofF is being misused when it is construed as a basis for an official "teaching position" concerning homosexuality. As well, notice another point the CofF makes.

The commentary softens the strictness of the CofF article and the two New Testament texts cited. "At the same time" the church is a place of welcome and forgiveness. This comment does not spell out a more nuanced approach to divorce and remarriage, but it does open the door for such. One could draw from this commentary a basis for accepting divorced and remarried people as full members of Mennonite congregations (as Mennonite churches increasingly do).

The CofF makes a strong statement about the importance of Christian marriage, but implicitly allows for exceptions in the case of divorce and remarriage—exceptions that need not negate the theological affirmation of the marriage covenant as a lifelong commitment. More important than absolute fidelity to the ideal is that churches "bring strength and healing to individuals and families"—including welcoming people who are divorced and remarried.

Could such an approach also be applied to people in same-sex covenanted partnerships? The CofF may be read to imply a "yes" to this question—if indeed the churches' highest priorities would be on bringing "strength and healing." It is true, such a reading and application would stand in tension with the Membership Guidelines' use of the CofF. However, there is no reason, based on what the CofF itself actually says, to read it as expressing rejection of same-sex marriage—certainly less reason than reading it as expressing rejection of remarriage after divorce. TM

**Ted Grimsrud** is a member of Shalom Mennonite Congregation in Harrisonburg, Va.

The actual confession of faith does not in fact mention homosexuality.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Leaders address controversies

## Politics, immigration and sexuality issues create polarities in the church.

In a time of heightened polarity around issues such as politics, immigration and human sexuality, area conferences across Mennonite Church USA have been making efforts to address controversy in creative ways that strengthen relationships.

At the delegate assembly in Columbus, Ohio, in July 2009, delegates passed a resolution "on following Christ and growing together as communities even in conflict" that called on the Executive Board to work with area conferences to provide and encourage the use of resources that assist conferences and congregations to engage in healthy discernment.

**Various conferences have followed** through on this resolution, focusing on relationships and creating safe spaces for respectful dialogue. This last summer, three conferences—Central District Conference, Western District Conference and Allegheny Mennonite Conference—were in the news as they worked with discernment on issues related to sexuality and sought to remain in relationship.

How have other conferences addressed polarities among their constituents?

While Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) has not addressed any one particular issue, leaders have attempted to be proactive by emphasizing the importance of strong and healthy relationships among individuals and churches.

"When MSMC was formed in 2006, relational accountability was adopted as one of the key points of conference culture," says moderator Rhoda Blough. She notes that MSMC regularly provides opportunities to focus on strengthening intraconference relationships, "realizing the importance of communication in both speaking and listening, especially in times of disagreement."

**The theme of the 2012 Faith and Life Forum**—an annual MSMC gathering intended to keep the focus on healthy relationships front and center—was "Listening and Speaking with Care." It provided participants with techniques for discussing controversial issues in ways that would enhance relationships rather than incite polarization.

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference also has developed a format that allows groups within the conference to have intentional and safe conversations about difficult issues. So far, the advisory council, missional leadership team, regional ministers and delegates have used this format to discuss racism and same-sex relationships.

Moderator-elect Jane Stoltzfus Buller says that the hope in creating this discussion format was that these conversations would move participants who believe differently "to have greater love for one another, to really listen and hear each other and to find a way forward on difficult issues."

While there are more conversations to be had, she says, "we are becoming more aware of how our own stories and experiences make a difference in our belief systems and thinking, and these difficult discussions have deepened our connections and, hopefully, our love for one another."

Southeast Mennonite Conference has been working with differences related to its constituents having diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. At least five racial/ethnic identities are significantly represented in SMC—including Garifuna, Hispanic, African-American, Haitian and Anglo-Saxon —and 60 percent of SMC churches are churches of color.

Seven years ago, the conference decided to restructure to ensure that each racial/ethnic group is represented in leadership. Today, SMC bylaws stipulate that the board and all committees include members from each racial/ethnic group and be balanced in gender.

**Conference minister Marco Güete** says, "In this new structure, the relationships among our churches have grown to be excellent. Churches with different racial/ethnic identities often get together for meals, fellowship and music, because it is important to us to spend time together. We know that everything we do must be multilingual, and we love it."

Other conferences have worked with challenges related to polity. In response to leftover tensions from a previous attempt to resolve how Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC) deals with issues of variance among member congregations, conference leaders organized a gathering in March 2011—called "Becoming a United Church in a Culture of Division"—to address the issue of congregational autonomy. Those who gathered for the conference affirmed eight commitments that now shape a foundational understanding of what it means to be a united church.

Executive conference minister David Boshart says that CPMC has come to approach hard issues with the understanding that "our goal is not to strain to create unity but to understand that unity is something that comes to us as a gift of God's grace."

**In response to a call from a pastor-peer group** looking to explore healthy ways of addressing congregational conflict, Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA sponsored a Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Peace Center workshop in October 2010 called "Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches."

The workshop offered opportunities for self-assessment, insight into understanding conflict, communication skills and training for managing group conflict.—*Hilary J. Scarsella of Mennonite Church USA*

# Herald Press books converted to e-readers

## Schowalter Foundation provides grant for conversion of current and new titles.

MennoMedia is converting key theological Herald Press books and Bible commentaries into digital formats to reach a wider audience with Anabaptist themes. The Schowalter Foundation of Newton, Kan., has given a grant to help in that process.

In addition, Herald Press is launching all new and forthcoming titles as e-books, such as the recently released *Making Friends Among the Taliban* by Jonathan Larson and *Laughter Is Sacred Space* by Ted Swartz.

In 2009, Ruth Stoltzfus Jost of Harrisonburg, Va., first approached Herald Press about getting into e-books. With only one arm almost her whole life, she finds it easiest to read e-books. She is only one of millions now making the choice to access books on a variety of e-readers.

Stephen King is credited with launching the e-book phenomenon with a publicity stunt to offer his novella *Riding the Bullet* only electronically in March 2000. By December 2011, 17 percent of adults had reported they read an e-book in the previous year. By February 2012, the share increased to 21 percent, according to Pew Internet and American Life Research. E-books are generally much less expensive.

In summer 2012, Herald Press began to convert a few titles for e-readers. Many have already been converted to Kindle formats by amazon.com. But with Herald Press converting and submitting its own e-books to stores such as Amazon, MennoMedia gains a higher percentage from the sale of each book, helping long-range financial stability.

"We want to make our books available digitally as a way to reach a wider audience," says executive director Russ Eanes. The books chosen for the grant project include the Believers Church Commentary series, books by John Howard Yoder, Anabaptist and Mennonite faith and worship books, Classics of the Radical Reformation series, the Polyglossia series featuring younger scholars, and the Christians Meeting Muslims series on interfaith dialogue.

Eanes says this will also preserve and extend the historical endowment of books on the history of Anabaptism.

"There is a lot of current, expanded interest in Anabaptism," he says.

E-books formats such as Kindle, Mobi and ePub can be downloaded directly to Kindle, Nook, iPad and other compatible readers and tablets.—*MennoMedia*

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# Palmer Becker influences global Anabaptism

## Workshops based on *Missio Dei* help fill need for practical pastoral training.

James Krabill

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Elder Zheng Shaojie, the leader of the church in Nanle County, China, a former Mennonite mission area, with Palmer Becker (left).

Palmer Becker's short-term mission trips abroad have been like conducting a traveling mini-seminary. The author of Mennonite Mission Network's *What Is an Anabaptist Christian?* (*Missio Dei* Number 18) last year held workshops in India based on the booklet, which has been translated into Hindi and a dozen other languages.

Becker was asked by the Rev. Jai Prakash Masih, a Mennonite pastor and translator, to offer a series of pastoral and leadership training seminars in India Sept. 12-21, 2012.

Masih, a graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., who pastors an Asian church in Lombard, Ill., did the Hindi translation and published about 1,000 copies in India. It was the most recent of the workshops he has held on different topics in at least seven countries since 2007.

**Masih accompanied Becker** and they both spoke at three synods in the central part of the country: Bihar Mennonite Mandli in Jharkhand state, Bharatiya General Conference Mennonite Church, and the Mennonite Church in India in Chattisgarh state.

The trip was organized by Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India. About 30 church leaders—men and some women—attended each workshop, in which Becker emphasized the three core principles of Anabaptism as described in the booklet:

- Jesus is the center of our faith.
- Community is the center of our lives.
- Reconciliation is the center of our work.

In each mission trip, Becker stresses that Anabaptists believe in following Jesus in daily life, studying and interpreting Scripture with other believers from an ethical, Christ-centered approach, structuring the church for community, and that forgiveness from God and forgiveness and peace among each other is essential for community.

"Much of the distinctive way in which we hold these beliefs was new to the pastors," Becker says of the Indian Christians and those he has taught in other countries. "There are always many expressions of appreciation for helping them understand what it means to be an Anabaptist Christian."

In rural areas of India and other countries, Christian leaders may have the passion, but not necessarily education beyond high school, much less seminary training. While his seminars have been well-received, Becker senses an urgent need in Asia for establishing practical pastoral training programs based close to the churches.

**Becker first developed the outline** of what would become *What Is an Anabaptist Christian?* while preparing to address the Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series conference at Hesston (Kan.) College in 2002. The lecture was received enthusiastically, which led to the booklet's publication in 2008, he said.

"When they read the book, missionaries or local people working with people of Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Vietnamese, Thai, Lao, Ethiopian, Hindi, Filipino and Arab backgrounds have said, 'This is what my people need!'" Becker says. "They have arranged for the translation and publication of the booklet and then invited me personally to introduce the concepts."

The booklet and a leader's guide are downloadable and are being studied by many Sunday school classes and small groups in North America. In 2010, Becker taught the concepts from the booklet at churches in China and churches and universities in Korea. He has also taught other topics, such as Anabaptist identity, pastoral care and counseling, and leadership and discipleship, which he taught earlier in the Hesston College Pastoral Ministries Program and this year at Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia. After the India workshops, Becker visited Vietnam and Hong Kong, where he taught on discipleship and experiencing God in daily life.

"Mennonites worldwide are seeking to find and clarify their identity," Becker says. "Most published materials have been addressed more to those in academia than to the common lay person. *What Is an Anabaptist Christian?* is brief and written in a style that seems to be understandable at a lay level." Download copies for free at www.mennonitemission.net/Resources/MissioDei/Pages/WhatIsAnAnabaptistChristian.aspx. Order larger quantities at store.mennomedia.org/What-is-an-Anabaptist-Christian-P669.aspx—*Wil LaVeist of Mission Network*

# 'Clown medic' supports hospital patients

## Robin Williams film about a doctor using humor inspired mission worker.

Esteban and Susana González Zugasti always cherished their family visits with the indigenous communities in the Chaco region of Argentina, where they, along with their three children, are mission workers.

But when their second child, Bernabé, was born with Down syndrome and required around-the-clock care, Susana realized she would no longer be able to continue making regular trips.

So she prayed that God would open another area of mission. God answered her prayer with *Patch Adams*.

The film, starring Robin Williams, is about a doctor who uses humor to connect with the children who are his patients. After watching the film, she realized she could do the same thing.

She learned about a local program of payamédicos—clown medics—that supports hospital patients emotionally. Now, she is a trainer, helping prepare new payamédicos.

The González Zugasti family—now Paloma, 9, Bernabé, 8, and Raquel, 4—has served since 2004 as part of the Mennonite team—an intercultural, interdenominational ministry sponsored by Mennonite Mission Network in the Chaco region of Argentina.

Originally from Mar del Plata, Argentina, they live in Resistencia, the capital of the Chaco province, and a launching point for visiting the Mocovi and Toba-Qom communities.

"This was important for me because I knew I was in the place I needed to be (caring for their children), but I was thinking about how I could work with indigenous folks who had much pain and sadness," she says.

**The clown medics work in groups** of two or three, using improvisation and silliness to help patients release anxiety and share their feelings.

And while her face may be painted, she's recognizable as a source of joy. When visiting an indigenous community, a woman looked at her with a glimmer of recognition in her eye. The woman approached Susana with a young girl in tow, her face beaming.

"You visited her in the hospital," the woman said. "We were in the burn unit. You had a blue wig."

Though Susana mostly stayed in Resistencia, Esteban continued visiting indigenous communities, walking with the spiritual leaders of the Mocovi and Toba-Qom groups.

One of his most important tasks was to help convene conferences in which the indigenous community leaders could come together to discuss not only theological issues but also the common challenges their communities face—lack of land, difficulties gaining access to good nutrition, discrimination by the broader society, and drug and alcohol abuse.

"In churches in general, people don't talk about these things," Esteban says, "so we felt it was important that we open a space to reflect together."

Photo provided

Susana González Zugasti (right) enjoys cheering up patients in the hospital through her work as a payamédica—a clown medic.

**In Argentinian society, indigenous groups** are almost invisible, even among evangelical churches in the country, Susana says.

"There is little connection between the 'white' Argentinian world and the indigenous world," she says. "For most white Christians, the only time indigenous groups are visible is when they (white Christians) come to give out clothes or do evangelistic crusades."

But since the 1940s, the indigenous evangelical churches in the Chaco have had their own leadership, pastors, teachers, evangelists and missionaries.

"Our role as the Mennonite team is not to plant churches but to accompany the indigenous churches and encourage their own theological development," Esteban says. "Our approach comes from an Anabaptist perspective."

**Esteban and Susana said their experience** of Christian community with other members of the Mennonite team in the Chaco has led them down a new path. They have learned from team members who lived in intentional communities in the United States. When the house next door to their good friends became available, they felt God's call to buy it, and the money became available in amazing ways. Upon their return to Mar del Plata last month, they were starting an intentional Christian community. Esteban plans to continue visiting the indigenous churches in the Chaco two or three times a year. They also hope to continue educating the "white church" about the presence and importance of the indigenous communities and churches.
*—Andrew Clouse of Mennonite Mission Network*

# First Sister Care held outside North America

## All-India Mennonite Women Conference held in Orissa, India, draws 325 women.

Rhoda Keener

Small group discussion allowed women from different geographical areas and language groups to process the material.

Approximately 325 Indian Mennonite women gathered in Cuttack, Orissa, India, for the All-India Mennonite Women Conference (AIMWC) to participate in the first Sister Care seminar to be held outside North America.

Rhoda Keener, codirector of Mennonite Women USA, and Carolyn Heggen, a psychotherapist who specializes in trauma healing and women's issues, led the Sister Care sessions Oct. 24-28, 2012.

It was AIMWC's triennial conference, this year hosted by the Brethren in Christ churches in Orissa. Nearly twice as many women as usual participated. Women from eight of the nine Indian Mennonite conferences traveled by train to fellowship with each other and to learn how they might nurture and encourage each other through times of loss and grief.

Heggen and Keener's presentations were adapted to fit the Indian context to communicate about equipping women for caring ministry in their churches.

**In USA Sister Care seminars,** several women share their stories of loss and grief and how the church was helpful or could have been more helpful. Heggen and Keener were advised by Indian women to use anonymous stories rather than asking women to share their own stories publicly. Indian women oversaw the writing of real-life stories, working with Twila Miller who spent many years in India with Mennonite Central Committee.

The stories were written with fictitious Indian names and "told" by a third-party narrator who read each woman's story. Four such stories presented in this way throughout the five days triggered intense responses from the participants. Women talked among themselves and eagerly took the microphone to tell others how women in their church communities minister to each other when a faith sister suffers or faces a challenging situation.

**They talked passionately, addressing the crises** introduced by the vignettes.

One story in particular struck a chord with many of the women. During the second session a narrator read "Meena's story," first in Hindi, then in English. Meena is married to a pastor who becomes verbally and physically abusive to her, especially on weekends, when he starts to worry about the Sunday morning service. Meena cannot make chappatis to his satisfaction on weekends, and he becomes verbally abusive and often gets so angry that he beats her.

Heggen asked the conference participants, "How might the women of the church help Meena?"

Drawing from passages in Genesis, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians, Keener taught that violence against women is a sin and is not part of God's plan for how women and men should relate to each other.

Keener said, "There are many verses in the Bible that point to equality between women and men. One example is how Jesus respected the woman at the well."

Heggen noted that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Violence against women is a sin against God." Numerous women responded later to the speakers: "You speak good words." One Indian woman leader said, "We have never had teaching like this."

Following the conference, Heggen, Keener, Twila Miller and Cynthia Peacock visited nine churches in Champa, Korba and Dhamtari to meet women who had been unable to attend the Cuttack event.

They shared ideas and excerpts from the Sister Care seminar. When asked what was significant about the teaching at Cuttack, women talked primarily about Meena's story. Many women said they or their good friends are "Meena" in the story.

Heggen says, "We experienced incredible hospitality and graciousness. These are such courageous, amazing women. Even though our worlds seem far apart, when we shared our stories, women trusted us and responded with their own stories."

The seminar concluded with an invitation to women to anoint themselves with water symbolic of their tears and the tears of their sisters, and then to anoint one another with "living water" from Jesus.—*Twila Miller for Mennonite Women USA*

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Rhoda Keener

Two women anoint one another during the closing blessing of the Sister Care seminar.

Rhoda Keener

Women theologians Nandy Nanda, left, and Elizabeth Kunjam participate in the All-India Mennonite Women Conference. Elizabeth led worship throughout the conference.

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# Displaced Congolese displaced again

## Mennonite Central Committee worker was in Goma during the takeover.

Michael J. Sharp

Mbonye Buhunda, 38, her husband and their six children, including Mapenli and Ishara, pictured, have been displaced repeatedly. Within the past several months, they fled their home in North Kivu, lived in tents at a school near Goma for two months, tried to return home in mid-November but were chased back to the school in Goma, only to run again when rebel group M23 took over Goma.

During Thanksgiving week, more than 250,000 people in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo were displaced from their homes and camps as rebel group M23 took control of Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu.

Many of the displaced people were moving for the second or third time, having already been forced from their homes and villages earlier in the year as M23 fought Congolese troops and terrorized villages on its way toward Goma.

**These displaced people are among the latest** to join the 1.5 million people in eastern Congo who have been forced from their homes by decades of fighting among many different local and regional armed groups.

The casualties are the civilians, says Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker Michael J. Sharp, who was in Goma during the time of the takeover. Sharp is from Goshen, Ind.

"It's not just this displacement," Sharp says. "These are very vulnerable people who were already displaced multiple times. People are pushed further and further away from their homes and are increasingly vulnerable. You can only get run down so many times until you can't survive anymore."

For example, Sharp says, M23 emptied the Kanyaruchinya camp, about six miles north of the city, of its estimated 70,000 people who had already been uprooted from their homes.

Many of them followed the main road south toward Goma, seeking shelter in the city or continuing on the main road west of Goma to camps for internally displaced people (IDP) close to the town of Sake.

However, when M23 overtook Goma, the exodus of displaced people continued, including 345 families from North Kivu who had taken refuge at a school near Goma in the fall. MCC had provided them with basic food and household supplies.

**The exodus led many to Sake,** only to be chased back to Goma when M23 engaged the Congolese army in heavy fire there.

"Even though Goma was an area of fighting, once it calmed down, some people went there. People know it's a hub for international organizations," Sharp says.

In Goma, the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC), an umbrella organization for 16 Protestant denominations in eastern Congo and an MCC partner, is responding to the needs of as many displaced people in the city as it can.

With MCC's support, they plan to provide food, water and basic household supplies to about 750 families. ECC denominations will provide spaces for the families to stay.

Already this year, MCC has contributed $128,000 of locally purchased food and material aid for ECC projects that impact displaced people.

In addition, through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, MCC provided $393,087 for food, seeds and tools to support families in North and South Kivu who are hosting displaced people.

ECC also is calling on people in Europe and the West to advocate with their governments on behalf of Congo, including refusing to give any military aid to Rwanda, a neighboring country that is linked to various armed groups in Congo, including M23, Sharp says. Uganda, too, is suspected of aiding M23.

**While Tim Lind, MCC representative in Congo** with his spouse, Suzanne, agrees with the ECC's call for advocacy, he says the problem is not just neighboring countries. They live in Kinshasa-Gombe.

"The Congolese government has been unable to maintain and establish basic infrastructure in areas such as justice, order, health care, education and transportation," he says. "This vacuum has encouraged multiple local militias, armed ethnic coalitions, Rwandan rebel groups and the national Congolese army to fight to control agricultural land, exploit mineral resources and settle local and ethnic scores."

*—Linda Espenshade of Mennonite Central Committee*

# Girl's desperate prayer leads to mother's healing

## Southeast Asian girl faces criticism for Christian faith in tribal animist context.

EMM archives

Women planting rice during the rainy season in Southeast Asia.

While growing up on her family's coffee farm, Becky (names and location have been omitted due to sensitivities) heard the name of Jesus in a song sometimes sung in her village. But in her tribal animist context, she had no idea who Jesus was or why he was in a song.

From an early age, Becky could see the hollowness of her family's religion. She saw her parents give alms to the monks, who would turn around and say, "That's all you're giving?"

She found her parents' beliefs—animist, with a thin veneer of Buddhism—to be dark and hypocritical, but because she wanted to be "a good girl," she honored her family's religion and tried very hard to never disturb the peace. One day while Becky was picking coffee, her mother was squatting by the river scrubbing dirty clothing. She had given birth two days before. Suddenly the water at her feet turned red.

**Her husband came quickly in response** to his wife's alarm, but by the time he realized the blood was coming from Becky's mother, it was too late. She had collapsed and was barely breathing. The doctor they called could do nothing to help her. They called the local spirit doctor, but he, too, was powerless to save Becky's mother. Her husband and friends began mourning her impending death. Family members ran into the fields to let Becky and her siblings know what had happened. Becky's brothers and sisters, wailing, ran to their mother.

But Becky stole away to the kitchen. She looked up and cried out, "Whoever is the one true God, whoever is real, whoever created everything, please save my mother!"

Moments later, her mother revived as if nothing had ever happened. Everyone was amazed. Happy but fearful, Becky was too afraid to tell anyone what had really happened and locked the experience deep inside her heart.

Years later, Becky connected with Eastern Mennonite Missions workers living in her region. Gradually she learned more and more about God and began to understand the story of Jesus. Her curiosity grew. Eventually, Becky openly admitted that she no longer believed her family's religion. Earlier this year, God used a dream to unlock her heart. She chose to commit her life to Christ.

**Becky began enthusiastically sharing her journey** to Jesus with many, but still she lacked the courage to tell her mother the story of who had saved her life so many years before. Then while at home one weekend, Becky felt the need to be honest, so she told her mother about her childhood prayer to the one true God. Reverently, her very traditional mother admitted that she believed Becky.

Some weeks later, Becky's mother began thrashing around, displaying nonhuman strength as she punched a hole through a wall without receiving even a scratch. No one could stop her. Becky and two of her Jesus-following friends took her mother to a home where they felt they would receive less spiritual opposition. Once there, Becky's mother was calm but still felt exhausted and terrified. It was then that Becky decided to tell her mother that she had become a Christian and confidently declared that she no longer feared the spirits. Becky's mother sat in silence as she tried to take everything in. After some time, she confided her interest in Jesus, but said she first needed to talk to her husband. If he agreed to believe, then she and Becky's siblings who were interested in Jesus could also openly become Christians.

Though she has become a target for ridicule and gossip, Becky finds great joy in sharing her faith. She does not keep track of the nasty things people say but prays for them to know the love of Jesus.—*Nita Landis of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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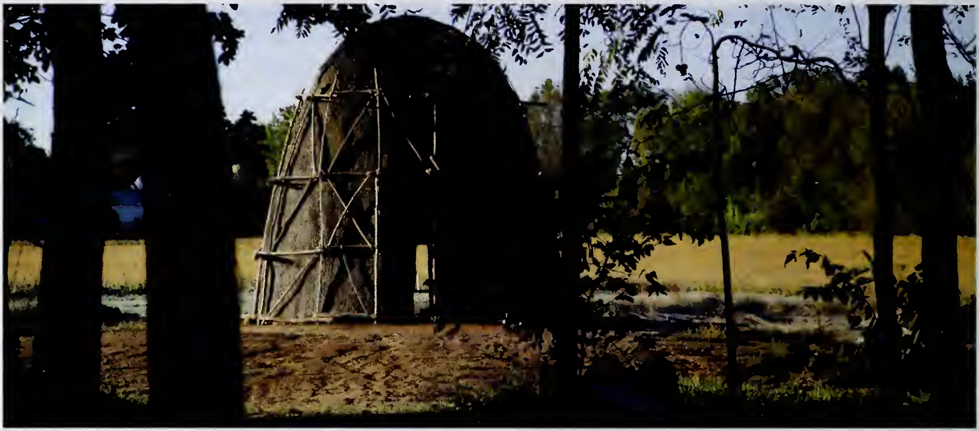
# Native American longhouse rises in Pennsylvania

## Native craftspeople are creating reproduction artifacts for the interior.

Lowell Brown



Major construction of the Lancaster Longhouse is complete, but additional donations are needed to finish the interior.

Lancaster County, Pa., known for its Amish and Mennonite communities, will soon be home to one of the nation's few replica Native American longhouses.

Major construction is complete on the 62-foot Lancaster Longhouse being created on the grounds of Lancaster County's oldest building, the 1719 Hans Herr House.

Longhouses were multifamily homes with long, arched roofs and were prevalent across eastern North America for hundreds of years before European settlement.

Now local Native Americans and the Circle Legacy Center—a Lancaster nonprofit dedicated to empowering First Nations Peoples—are collaborating with the 1719 Hans Herr House and Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society to create a longhouse as an educational exhibit.

"Mennonites were the first permanent European settlers here," says Becky Gochnauer, Herr House director. "We have three generations of Herr family homes on this property, but until now we had no way to represent the neighborhood the Herr family moved into. A longhouse enables our organizations to tell the Lancaster County story from the 16th century up to the turn of the 20th century."

**Construction of the longhouse** began in April 2012.

"They're coming together to help Native People but also to help themselves," says MaryAnn Robins (Onondaga), board president for the Circle Legacy Center, "to build bridges in regard to race, in regard to religion."

Throughout the project, organizers struggled to integrate modern construction standards with historic practices.

Dimensions were based on a longhouse excavated in nearby Washington Boro, Pa., in 1969. Post ends were charred before being buried. Bark saved from stripping the saplings was used to lash them together, and joints were also reinforced with metal hardware. Sheets of synthetic bark were used in place of natural bark to cover the roof.

"We want it to look as authentic as possible, and we want it to be safe for school groups," construction manager Ned Pelger says. "We want to be environmentally responsible, and we want it to last for future generations."

**Attention now shifts to the inside** of the house. Furnishings coordinator Ruth Py (Lenape) is working with Native craftspeople to create reproduction artifacts, including spears, arrows, fish hooks, gourds, bowls, baskets, necklaces, boots and leggings.

In October 2012, a small group of staff and board members from the Circle Legacy Center, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society and the Hans Herr House gathered with members of the Native American community to dedicate the space. Gochnauer says, "Native Americans and Mennonites share a history of misunderstanding, persecution and hardships that—while very different—provided a common place where mutual support and understanding could transcend culture and race."

Monetary donations are also needed to complete the project. Donations can be made at www.lancasterlonghouse.org. The longhouse is scheduled to open in May.—*Lowell Brown of Lancaster Historical Society*

# Illinois woman starts weekend lunch program

## Weekend Snackpac feeds 1,130 children through partnerships with 50 churches.

When Jan Unzicker visited her daughter in Portland, Ore., she met a woman who received free lunches during her days as a student.

"It meant a lot to her that someone cared about her, and it helped keep her in school," says Unzicker. Unzicker attends Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church.

This same woman now runs a backpack lunch program in Portland. Unzicker says she thought, "This is something I could do back home in Illinois."

So, in 2011, Unzicker started the Weekend Snackpac program, which provides weekend lunches for students who qualify for free or reduced price lunches in the public school system.

By November 2012, the program was serving 1,130 children in 43 schools in 24 towns through partnerships with 50 churches. School administrators hand out information to families that qualify.

The families opt in by returning a permission slip. Then teachers put the lunches in the students' backpacks at the end of day on Fridays while the class is in gym or at recess.

John Allshouse

Volunteers at the Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church are shown packing lunches for the Weekend Snackpac Program established by Jan Unzicker, who lives in the rural Washburn/Roanoke (Ill.) area.

Local churches provide the lunches. They buy the food, pack the lunches and deliver them to the schools. Some churches partner with just one school; others provide for multiple schools.

Contents vary, but included in each lunch are food items that balance nutrition with accessibility, meaning students can prepare the food themselves.

Unzicker first contacted the principal of Lowpoint-Washburn (Ill.) Elementary School where her children went to school. The first partnership was between Metamora Mennonite Church and the Lowpoint-Washburn school.

Jan's very passionate about building up smaller churches that have…been taught by our culture that they are failures.—Michael Danner

"Jan's ministry is clearly one that was born out of a vision that God placed on her heart," says Michael Danner, pastor of Metamora. "She bears witness to what God is doing to help hungry kids get food."

Danner says that Jan makes partnerships between churches and schools possible.

"She's very passionate about building up smaller churches that have, in many ways, been taught by our culture that they are failures," he says.

Often, smaller churches doubt their ability, says Unzicker. "In El Paso, Ill., five churches work together. These five churches have a history of splitting from one another, so this is a great thing that they can work together," says Unzicker.

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# Why we need seminaries reimagined

## Sara Wenger Shenk: There is no foolproof formula for educating leaders.

There are countless good schools that prepare all manner of public servants. We have great doctors and lawyers, business leaders and scientists—thanks be to God. But as Craig Dykstra of the Lilly Endowment reminds us, leadership of the church requires a complexity and integrity of intelligence that is unusual: One has to be smart in lots of really interesting ways. That smartness involves substantive knowledge and practical know-how along with the remarkable ability to move into contexts that are full of joy, misery and conflict and name what is really going on—through the eyes of faith. There is no other work like it, Dykstra says.

**A confession:** As an educator and a president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., I presumably know a few things about how leaders are formed. But I must confess that I am confounded by the mystery. When I see a leader guide worship that awakens body, mind and spirit, I am in awe. When I watch a pastor initiate ministry that attends to the well-being of an entire neighborhood, I give thanks. When leaders of a congregation empower everyone's gifts for the good of all, my spirit dances with joy.

There is no foolproof formula for educating leaders of any organization, and certainly not for the church. Biblical stories of God's call often surprise us by the ways unspectacular people become spokespersons for God's reconciling mission—some of them highly educated, others not so much.

What I do know, however, is that many ordinary people who said, "Here am I" and gave themselves to study, prayer and practice in one of our Mennonite seminaries have become spiritually mature, respected leaders in congregations, businesses, universities and social service organizations. During my travels in the last two years, many alumni have told me about the transformative impact their seminary education had on the quality of their leadership.

**A sober acknowledgment**: There's a lot of talk these days about "the future of the seminary"—from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to *Canadian Mennonite*, from the Association of Theological Schools (with its 260 accredited schools) to the "Sam-Hedrin" (20-plus Mennonite retired professionals with whom I recently spoke). Lots of concerned people are cogitating about how theological education needs to change in order to better serve the church.

I've participated in countless conversations about the cultural, pedagogical, financial, demographic and spiritual dynamics in flux as we form leaders for a rapidly changing world. There are calls to move more learning from the classroom to "the streets" with extended apprenticeships.

AMBS/Peter Ringenberg

Students in AMBS' Human Development and Christian Formation class establish spiritual friendships with others in the class, in addition to practicing a variety of spiritual disciplines.

Financial strains many seminaries face have led to a search for fiscally sustainable models. Educational pedagogy is expanding to make learning accessible to people from the distance. Faculty are shifting their specialized focus to create interdisciplinary learning experiences.

**But more needs to change.** The future church may not look much like the established congregations of today, with our lined-up pews and scripted bulletin worship. The evidence is everywhere that people are hungry for spirituality and for genuine relationships, but they are not coming to church like they used to. What if the primary purpose for an Anabaptist biblical seminary was to educate Christian leaders to form and guide communities of shalom? What if a seminary was an intentional community—a community solely devoted to:

- understand the Bible,
- speak fluently about faith,
- discern the Spirit at work in culture,
- grow into spiritually mature disciples of Jesus Christ?

One doesn't acquire the qualities needed to serve as trustworthy, Christ-centered leaders without being deeply formed by the biblical story. Neither will one be ready to serve the reconciling mission of God without theological fluency as ambassadors of Christ's peace. Within a culture polarized around divisive issues, one won't confidently lead community discernment without practice. Neither can people serve as worthy spiritual guides without themselves growing in spiritual maturity.

**Reading the Bible**: More and more of us want to engage the Bible on its own terms, not through some preconceived theory imposed on the Bible. We want to read the Bible as the astonishing drama it is—a multisplendored drama of the Word who was there at the beginning with God yet became one of us, full of grace and truth.

Gerald Gerbrandt, a Canadian Mennonite educational leader, told a recent gathering of Mennonites that we've had inadequate imagination for what Scripture is and how it can be authoritative. Scripture is an ancient, narrative book. We need to treat it in a manner consistent with its true nature, he said. Scripture offers us a great authoritative and divinely inspired drama that is as yet unfinished. We need to go back to Scripture to better understand our role in the drama.

An Anabaptist biblical seminary that's worth its salt will teach Spirit-attuned readers to translate, preach, pray, sing and dramatize the biblical narratives. Why? Because of their enduring ability to reveal God to us wherever we are.

**Theological fluency:** Whether because of laziness, fear or immaturity, many of us are unable to think, write or talk persuasively about what we believe. This was hardly a shortcoming of the Anabaptists.

Theology should not be an esoteric discipline reserved for the experts. Theology is what any faith-filled person does (more or less well) to make sense of how God is active amid the dilemmas, tragedies and joys of everyday life.

An Anabaptist seminary will make fluency in the language of faith a priority. We draw from deep wells of ancient wisdom to enrich conversations about who God is, who we are and how we are called to live. To become confident, respectful witnesses, we practice theological conversation in cross-cultural, interracial, and interreligious contexts.

**Discerning culture**: Gone are the days when we could hide in ethnically separate, homogeneous enclaves of assumed purity. Gone are easy bifurcations into tidy categories of sacred and secular. But front and center is the need for us to discern the spirits—to become detectors of where the Spirit of God is moving.

Our communities are increasingly diverse, making life richer and making it more challenging to find unity—the kind of unity that Christ so longed for his disciples to cultivate. Jesus prayed for his disciples, just before he was arrested, "May [they] become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me" (John 17:23).

AMBS New Testament professor Mary Schertz writes that the Mennonite tendency to divide over disagreements rather than learn to be a discerning yet unified community has not been one of our strengths. Taking the cross of Jesus seriously means that suffering love is to be played out in the arena of discernment around difficult issues, as in all other areas of our common life. There can be no holier work, she says, no more compassionate work than to understand each other and God better by engaging in the difficult conversations we currently find ourselves in the midst of.

The splits our community has often experienced are a tragic fracturing of Christ's body. It is no wonder that many people's immediate association with religion—Christian and otherwise—is of conflict. An Anabaptist seminary has an important responsibility to educate leaders who can guide discernment processes around difficult issues, so that everyone will know by our costly love whose disciples we are.

**Spiritual maturity:** Almost nothing is more painful and disillusioning than when a trusted leader is found to be abusive, deceptive or more into self-promotion than the glory of God.

An Anabaptist seminary provides opportunities in an overwhelmingly self-indulgent culture to grow in spiritual maturity. We invite each other to grow as disciples of Christ, willing to be accountable with our longings, failures and joys in spiritual friendships.

We invite each other to affirm lifestyles that steward the goodness of creation and are financially disciplined. We invite each other to affirm vocations of singleness and uphold public covenants of marriage. We are committed to foster sexual shalom, as AMBS theology professor Gayle Gerber Koontz calls it—holding together the unity of the church and holiness of life.

As spiritually mature people of faith, we invite each other to covenant together to incarnate the saving reign of God. We covenant together to become, by the grace of God, the visible body of Christ, led by the Spirit.

There can be no holier work, no more compassionate work than to understand each other and God better by engaging in the difficult conversations that we currently find ourselves in the midst of.—Mary Schertz

The qualities I name above—biblical understanding, theological fluency, cultural discernment and spiritual maturity—seem to be weakening in many of our faith communities. Thus my assertion with full-hearted conviction that more than ever we need seminaries—reimagined. The mission of an Anabaptist biblical seminary to educate Christian leaders to form and guide communities of shalom has become ever more critically important.—*Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.*

# Contributors set new record

## $83,497 from 911 households is new record for *The Mennonite.*

Contributions to *The Mennonite* from 911 households, congregations and organizations totalled $83,497 between Dec. 16, 2011, and Dec. 13, 2012. This was a 2.7 percent increase over the previous year and includes the single largest donation on record: $6,995.73 from the distribution of the assets of Bethel Mennonite Church in Pekin, Ill., a former Central District Conference congregation that closed in 2009.

"The generous support of our readers is an inspiration," says Everett J. Thomas, editor of *The Mennonite*. "We receive no subsidy from our denomination. So these contributions, along with subscription and advertising revenue, are the third leg of the stool that provides stability for us."

The Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA require *The Mennonite* to be a self-supporting entity. However, at their April 2012 meeting, the board of directors for The Mennonite, Inc., formally requested that *The Mennonite* be included in the formula whereby undesignated contributions to Mennonite Church USA are distributed.

The following list of contributors does not include the names of members from 190 households who requested to remain anonymous:

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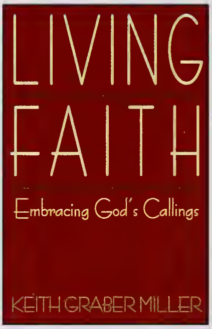

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## CALENDAR

**Antiracism Analysis Training**, Feb. 22–24, Philadelphia Mennonite High School, Philadelphia, Pa. Online registration and details at franconiacon-ference.org/mission/see-with-new-eyes.

**Spirituality & Shalom: Living at the Intersection of Faith & Justice,** the 2013 Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship conference, will be held Feb. 8-10 at Bluffton (Ohio) University. Spirituality's role in peacebuilding—and peacebuilding's role in individuals' spiritual lives—is the focus of the conference, an annual gathering of representatives of Mennonite colleges and universities but open to the public as well.

## WORKERS

**Akerson, James**, was ordained as pastor of Beldor Mennonite Church, Elkton, Va., on Dec. 2, 2012.

**Baruti, Maurice**, was licensed as lead pastor of French Speaking for Revival, Elkins Park, Pa., on Oct. 21,2012.

**Detweiler, Randy**, began a term as lead pastor of Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind., on Nov. 5, 2012.

**Fyffe, Joshua**, was licensed as pastor of West Liberty Mennonite Church, West Liberty, Ky., on Nov. 18, 2102.

**Kaye, Caleb**, was licensed as assistant pastor of Capital Christian Fellowship, Lanham, Md., on Dec. 2, 2012.

**Monger, Dawn**, was ordained as Minister of Congregational Life at Lindale Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Oct. 28, 2012.

**Scott, Christopher,** was licensed at Stephens City, Va., on Dec. 2, 2012 for his church planting ministry with The Exchange in Winchester, Va.

## DEATHS

**Beachy, Miriam Weaver**, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 24, 2012. Spouse: John E. Beachy. Parents: Henry and Liza "Lizzie" Markley Weaver. Children: Cheryl Paulovich, Lynette Bauman, John Allen, Kenton; 11 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 28 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Birky, Arlene F. Hartman**, 78, Wakarusa, Ind., died Nov. 30, 2012. Spouse: Marston Birky. Parents: Willis and Effie Loucks Hartman. Children: Dr. Duane Birky, Pamela Klotz, Patricia Birky; three grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 5 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa.

**Bontrager, David A.**, 97, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 2, 2012. Spouse: Ilva Beck Bontrager. Spouse: Mary Weaver Bontrager (deceased). Parents: Andrew and Fannie Bontrager. Children: Twila, Orval, Duane, Joan, Betty Jo, Kay, Bonnie. Funeral: Nov. 5 at East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Brandt, Eldon James**, 84, Yankton, S.D., died Oct. 27, 2012. Spouse: Anny Neufeld Brandt. Parents: William P. and Lillian Bartell Brandt. Children: Bruce, Merle, Sidney; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 2 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

**Brubaker, Raymond S.**, 82, Lancaster, Pa., died Nov. 4, 2012. Spouse: Ruth Brubaker. Parents: Levi and Anna Brubaker. Children: Ray, Cheryl Buser, Lucy Brubaker; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 8 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

**Copsey, James "Jim,"** 86, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 10, 2012. Spouse: Joan Gyllstrom Copsey (deceased). Parents: Jim and Olivia Copsey. Child: Lori Copsey; one grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 14 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

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**Dirksen, Melvin A.**, 81, Denver, Colo., died Nov. 2, 2012, of multiple myeloma cancer. Spouse: Arzella Nikkel Dirksen. Parents: Adolf N. and Martha Schmidt Dirksen. Children: Jim, Jan Williams, Suzanne Opp; six grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 10 at First Mennonite Church, Denver.

**Enns, Nick**, 84, Altona, Manitoba, died July 25, 2012. Spouse: Trudy Enns. Parents: Isaac Enns and Agatha Peters. Children: Bob, Don, Gary, Paul, Mary Ann Friesen, Doug, Linda Dyck, Mark; 19 grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 28 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Felton, Rebecca "Becky" Beachy**, 59, Quakertown, Pa., died Nov. 2, 2012, of cancer. Spouse: Jonathan "Jon" Felton. Parents: Vernon N. and Nora Miller Beachy. Children: Cody, Torey. Funeral: Nov. 11 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Perkasie, Pa.

**Garber, Maurice E.**, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 2, 2012. Spouse: Elizabeth Miller Garber (deceased). Parents: Earl and Bertha Kauffman Garber. Children: Karen Troyer, Joan Gingerich, Gretchen Weaver, Craig Garber; 13 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 8 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Hoeppner, Henry**, 91, Altona, Manitoba, died Aug. 19, 2012. Spouse: Anne Hoeppner (deceased). Parents: John I. Hoeppner and Anna Klippenstein. Children: Ben, Henry "Harry," Martha Penner, Esther Wiebe, Clarence. Funeral at Altona EMMC Church, burial in Neubergthal near Altona.

**Holst, Glada Kathleen Troyer**, 89, Shipshewana, Ind., died Nov. 4, 2012. Spouse: Jack Holst (deceased). Parents: James and Nora Yoder Troyer. Funeral: Nov. 6 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

**Hostetler, Marlene L. James**, 78, Louisville, Ohio, died Oct. 13, 2012. Spouse: Leon Hostetler (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Betty King James. Children: Kelley Poyser, Shawna Keefe, Brent, Joel; 13 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 17 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

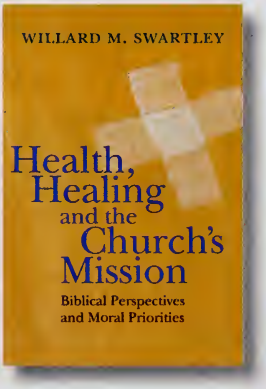
**Hunsberger, Harold D.**, 91, Telford, Pa., died Nov. 12, 2012. Spouse: Charlotte M. Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Earl H. Hunsberger, Sr. and Estella Detweiler Hunsberger. Children: Mark, James, Sylvia Shelly, Lynette Marksberry; 11 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 16 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

**Lambright, Ruth Louise Miller**, 88, LaGrange, Ind., died Nov. 17, 2012. Spouse: Harold Lambright (deceased). Parents: J. Elmer and Rosa Yoder Miller. Children: Birdena Bollenbacher, Karen Kotleba, Marcile Lindsey, Karl, Glendon, Marlin, Mary Lambright, Dennis, Merrit, Weldon; 22 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 17 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana, Ind.

**Lehman, Russell**, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 1, 2012. Spouse: Cleo Lucille Weldy Lehman (deceased). Parents: Charles and Bertha Holdeman Lehman. Children: Gloria Reynolds, Dean, Bruce; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 4 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Liechty, Clifford D.**, 86, Grabill, Ind., died Oct. 23, 2012. Spouse: Betty Rupp Liechty (deceased). Parents: Peter A. and Martha Yoder Liechty. Children: Jon, Jim, Jerry, Joy Yoder; eight grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 27 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

**Livengood, Willard H.**, 93, Springs, Pa., died Nov. 20, 2012. Spouse: Alvina Miller Livengood. Parents: Homer H. and Effie King Livengood. Children: Terry, Kenneth; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 24 at Springs Mennonite Church.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**Miller, Ruth Marie Gingerich**, 91, Wellman, Iowa, died Nov. 18, 2012. Spouse: D. Max Miller. Parents: Chris and Matilda Swartzendruber Gingerich. Child: Rex. Funeral: Nov. 21 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

**Reese, William Edward**, 81, Louisville, Ohio, died Nov. 8, 2012. Spouse: June Henkelmann Reese. Parents: John and Mary Margaret Hunt Reese. Children: David, Janet Hopkins; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 23 at Stier-Israel Funeral Home, Louisville.

**Schmidt, Kathleen "Kathy" Sue**, 67, Goessel, Kan., died Nov. 12, 2012. Parents: Rudolf "Rudy" and Luella Funk Schmidt. Funeral: Nov. 16 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

**Schrock, Pauline L. Liechty**, 93, Orrville, Ohio, died Aug. 29, 2012. Spouse: N. Wilmer Schrock (deceased). Parents: John and Cora Berkey Liechty. Children: Tim, J. Thomas, P. David, Joanna Swartley; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 1 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

**Seaman, Paul Landis**, 85, Harleysville, Pa., died Nov. 2, 2012. Spouse: Doris Delp Seaman. Parents: William and Susan Landis Seaman. Children: Paul, Jr., Diane Allebach, Dennis; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 6 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

**Seese, Adrian Armand**, 60, Jenner Township, Pa., died Oct. 3, 2012, of leiomyosarcoma. Parents: Dale Bernard Seese and Allegra May Hironimus Seese. Funeral: Oct. 6 at Carpenter Park Mennonite Church, Davidsville, Pa.

**Short, Marjorie M. Rupp**, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Nov. 6, 2012. Spouse: Oakley Short (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Amanda Wyse Rupp. Children: Rex, Jane Burkholder, Jerry; 12 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; six step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 9 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

**Springer, Betty Weber**, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 11, 2012. Spouse: Nelson Springer (deceased). Parents: Henry S. and Mary Ann Burkholder Weber. Children: Ken, Beth Farrand, Joe, Tina; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

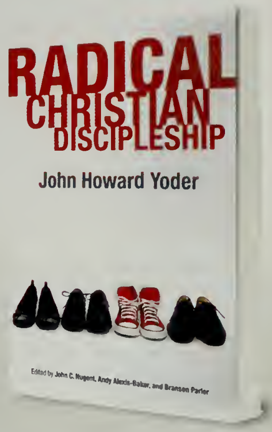
**Swartzendruber, Kathleen Jeanette Yoder**, 86, Kalona, Iowa, died Nov. 8, 2012. Spouse: Dale Swartzendruber. Parents: Ray A. and Kathryn Pearl Miller Yoder. Children: Karl, Myra Tierney, John, David; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 11 at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona.

**Swartzendruber, Leon W.**, 84, Pigeon, Mich., died Nov. 4, 2012. Spouse: Edith Ruby Swartzendruber. Parents: David and Ellen Weidman Swartzendruber. Children: Ronald, Evelyn Weir, Roger; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 10 at Michigan Avenue Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

**Weaver, Anna Martha Yoder**, 80, Scottdale, Pa., died Oct. 30, 2012. Spouse: Herbert Weaver. Parents: Levi and Hettie Anna Harshbarger Yoder. Children: Kenneth Alan, Neal, Susan Leighty; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 10 at Scottdale Mennonite Church.

**Winter, Dalina K.**, 40, Willow Street, Pa., died Nov. 2, 2012, of cancer. Parents: Warren C. and Jean L. Unruh Winter. Funeral: Nov. 10 at The New Danville Campus of Lancaster Mennonite School, Lancaster, Pa.

**Yoder, Willis E.**, 89, Arthur, Ill., died Oct. 10, 2012. Spouse: Katie Blucker Yoder (deceased). Parents: Eli D. and Katie Ann Mast Yoder. Children: Judy Jones, Gary; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Arthur Mennonite Church.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**Zion Mennonite Church** in Hubbard, Ore., seeks ***senior pastor (full-time)***. For more information about the congregation, please contact Joe Parker (Search Committee Chair) at jparkerpdx@yahoo.com. To apply, please contact Katherine Pitts (PNMC Conference Minister) at kjpitts@pnmc.org to submit a Ministerial Leadership Information packet.

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**Rockhill Mennonite Community**
(www.rockhillmennonite.org) a continuing care retirement community, seeks a chief executive officer. Situated on 44 picturesque acres in historic Bucks County, Pa., the organization provides a broad range of services including independent living, personal care, healthcare, and adult day services. Preferred candidates will be a member of an Anabaptist affiliated congregation, be eligible for Nursing Home Administrator licensure in Pa., and have at least five years leadership experience in a healthcare or social service organization. Interested candidates may contact Caryn Howell with MHS Alliance at Caryn@StiffneyGroup.com or 574-537-8736.

The new Sunday school curriculum produced by **MennoMedia and BrethrenPress** is accepting applications to ***write for Preschool through Junior Youth age groups*** for 2014-15. All writers will attend an April 22–25 orientation in Milford, Ind. See Job Opportunities at www.gatherround.org. Application deadline Feb. 9, 2013.

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**Bethesda Mennonite Church**, located in rural Henderson, Neb., is seeking a full-time ***lead pastor*** to lead a multi-pastoral team. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology, along with strong preaching, leadership and communication skills. A Master of Divinity degree with pastoral experience is required. The Bethesda congregation is a member of the Central Plains Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested persons should contact the Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler at P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247; 319-458-0224.

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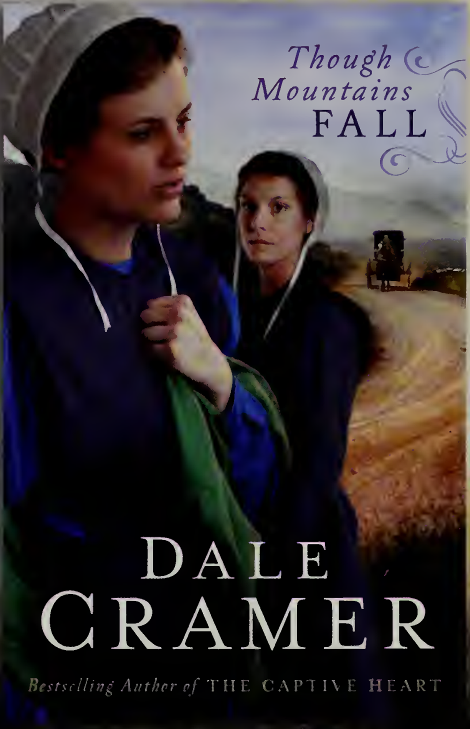

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# Mennonite or Christian?

**Peter Epp** teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba.

If a stranger asks you about your religion, what do you say? Do you tell her you're Mennonite, or do you prefer to say Christian?

Most of the Mennonites I know have a clear preference, but they don't all have the same one. And they often have strong opinions about those who answer differently. Do you tell strangers you're Mennonite? Well then, maybe you're ashamed of Christ. Do you tell strangers you're Christian? Well then, maybe you're ignorant of your roots.

They're loaded answers, and they reveal a fault line in our identity. It's not just different semantics; it's different ways of seeing ourselves. It shouldn't be surprising, then, if our youth and young adults aren't sure how to see their identity either. Do they focus on what Christians have in common, or do they focus on what makes them unique? As a church body, we don't give them a consistent answer.

For most of my life, our differences have kept me in the church. In high school, Anabaptist history convinced me that I belonged to something important. At my public college, peers and professors showed an interest in my "Mennonite-ness" that they never showed in Christianity. Throughout both stages of my life, whenever I was ready to give up on mainstream Christianity, I didn't turn from faith. I just nestled deeper into our Mennonite expression of it.

Those experiences laid the bedrock for how I teach Mennonite studies. In fact, they're probably why I teach Mennonite studies. But recently, through the prodding of a thoughtful colleague and a committed student, I've felt God nudging me toward the crack in that bedrock. They've challenged me to ask myself, Can we pass on an identity that is Mennonite and ecumenical?

I'm now wondering if the following threefold approach might help us as we pass on our faith:

We need to make the next generation proud and critical of Christian commonality as well as Mennonite uniqueness.

**1. We nurture a longing for common ground.**

Even though I'd failed to notice it, this one should be obvious. In fact, we probably all learned it in Kindergarten. When we interact with others, we should start with what we have in common. The same goes for how we define ourselves. When Terry Schellenberg, the vice president external of Canadian Mennonite University, visited my school, he used two lists to define Mennonites. The first established basic Christian beliefs that would be held by all Christians. They were obvious, which may be why I've usually skipped them. But now I'm feeling called to breathe new life into them. What if we consistently reminded our youth and young adults of the beautiful connections they can make outside the Mennonite community? And what if we helped them start building those connections?

**2. We nurture a passion for our uniqueness.**

Terry's second list included many of the descriptors we've traditionally used to emphasize how we're different. These were Anabaptist classics such as nonviolence, social justice, simple living and community. Though Mennonites don't hold a monopoly on any of these, they are undoubtedly tied to the unique way we interpret our past and present. They are the faithful discoveries of a particular path that only we are on. As such, we need to remember that our faith tradition brings something valuable to the Christian body. We may not have all the answers, and we may have much to learn from others, but we'd do a disservice to the broader church if we neglected our particular gifts and contributions.

**3. We nurture vigilantly critical minds.**

While a longing for common ground and a passion for uniqueness are essential, both can become a problem if we don't approach them carefully. You don't have to study our history for long to recognize that the Christian majority isn't always right. You also don't have to study it for long to recognize that we aren't always right either. Whether we're embracing others or taking pride in ourselves, we need to do so with a constant awareness that both have pitfalls. It's easy to follow the crowd, and it's easy to feel self-satisfied. But if we approach ourselves and others with a healthy criticism, we'll all have more integrity because of it.

In short, I've become convinced that we need to make the next generation proud and critical of Christian commonality as well as Mennonite uniqueness. If we do, we may find that choosing to identify as Mennonite or Christian isn't so divisive anymore. Instead, we'll all recognize that we need some of both to fully articulate the breadth of our convictions. TM

## FILM REVIEWS

**Lincoln** (PG-13) is a political drama about President Lincoln's struggle to get the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery, passed before the Confederacy surrendered. Daniel Day-Lewis's performance is outstanding. He reveals the human Lincoln behind the icon we tend to exalt.—*Gordon Houser*

**Life of Pi** (PG) is a fable about storytelling and belief. Based on the prize-winning book, it tells the amazing story of a teenage boy surviving a journey across the Pacific on a lifeboat in the company of a Bengal tiger. This magical film is one of the most religious released this year.—*gh*

**Anna Karenina** (R) is a creative adaptation of Tolstoy's classic novel about Anna's illicit affair with Count Vronsky. The film focuses on various views of love and how that is lived out in Russian society. Director Joe Wright's artistic treatment is unique and arresting.—*gh*

## BOOK REVIEW

**The Gospel of Rutba: War, Peace and the Good Samaritan Story in Iraq** by Greg Barrett (Orbis Books, 2012, $25) recounts the story of three U.S. Christian peacemakers, including a Mennonite pastor, who were in Iraq at the beginning of the war in 2003. After nearly dying in a car accident, they were rescued by Iraqi Muslims who took them to a clinic in the town of Rutba, whose hospital had been bombed by U.S. planes. They received protection and care and returned in 2010 to thank the doctors and others who saved them. Barrett's account is thorough but doesn't even pretend to be objective.—*gh*

**A Hobbit Journey: Discovering the Enchantment of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth** by Matthew Dickerson (Brazos Press, 2012, $16.99) uncovers Christian themes in Tolkien's writings. Included are his antipathy toward war and violence, toward human freedom and social justice. This is an expanded version of Dickerson's earlier book, *Following Gandalf.*—*gh*

# Movies (gasp) with female leads

Ever heard of the Bechdel test? Named after the comic-strip artist and memoirist Alison Bechdel, it assesses movies according to a three-step formula. To pass the test, a film "(1) has to have at least two [named] women in it (2) who talk to each other (3) about something besides a man."

Although a visit to the website bechdeltest.com suggests that things have been improving recently, the test underscores the reality that most films are presented primarily with male protagonists and from a male perspective.

In an article in the *New York Times* ("Hollywood's Year of Heroine Worship," Dec. 6, 2012), film critic A.O. Scott points out that 2012 has been not only a good year for movies but "a pretty good year for female heroism."

He names some movies with female protagonists: *Snow White and the Huntsman*, *Brave*, *Hunger Games*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and *Zero Dark Thirty*. This can be misleading, though, since the top-selling movies of the year, such as *The Avengers*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, *The Amazing Spider Man* and *Skyfall* feature mostly male heroes and are geared to a male (mostly teenage) audience.

And when we get to the Oscar race for best picture, the favorites, among whom may be *Argo*, *Flight*, *Lincoln* and *The Master*, feature male leads. An exception likely will be *Zero Dark Thirty*, which, though it features a female lead, is about the hunt for and killing of Osama bin Laden and thus appeals to male audiences.

While there are more Hollywood movies with female leads, these parts often resemble male leads in action films—they fight and kill their enemies.

Scott laments the loss of an earlier era, when Hollywood took "pride in its 'woman's pictures,' a category that embraced many of the immortal romances and melodramas of the studio era and that made actresses like Bette Davis, Joan Crawford and Ingrid Bergman into powerful industry players as well as adored stars."

That era also included many intelligent comedies with strong female characters. Such films are rarer today.

One place to broaden one's exposure to female roles is in foreign films, either through Netflix or other sites. Many French films have strong female leads that aren't under 30.

And if you look at British TV shows, you often find female leads who are older, not always strikingly beautiful and don't look anorexic.

Beyond simply finding films with female leads, it is rewarding to find films with interesting characters. In such films, the characters develop and face complex situations beyond merely seeking revenge for some despicable act.

Scott offers some examples from this year. One is *Amour*, which won Canne's Palme d'Or last May, tells of a couple in their 80s. Scott writes: "Anne, who is a wife, a mother, a musician and a teacher and whose decline and death, in the company of her faithful husband, Georges, constitute as intensely particular and as grandly universal a story as you could want. Anne is completely (and painfully) human. She is more than the sum of her domestic, artistic and professional roles, even though she bears the traces, in her extraordinary face, of the various roles she has performed."

Films can serve to show us life and introduce us to new understandings of our life in this world. Portraying that world too exclusively from a male perspective does not serve us. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

## RESOURCES

**Bethel College of Kansas: 1887-2012** by Keith L. Sprunger (Bethel College, 2012, $39.95) tells the story of the oldest Mennonite college in North America. The coffee table book covers the highlights of the college's 125 years and includes many photos.

**The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World** by Daniel M. Bell Jr. (BakerAcademic, 2012, $19.99) compares and contrasts capitalism and Christianity, showing how Christianity provides resources for faithfully navigating the postmodern global economy.

**A Hobbit's Journey: Discovering the Enchantment of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth** by Matthew Dickerson (Brazos Press, 2012, $16.99) shows how a Christian worldview and Christian themes undergird Tolkien's Middle-Earth writings and how they are fundamentally important to understanding his vision.

**An Alzheimer's Primer** by Joanne Niswander (2012, $12.99) relates the experience of the author and her husband. She writes: "We lived our days at peace with what was happening and tried to make life the best it could be, all the way to the end." It is available at amazon.com, bn.com and from the author at 700 Maple Crest Court, Bluffton, OH 45817.

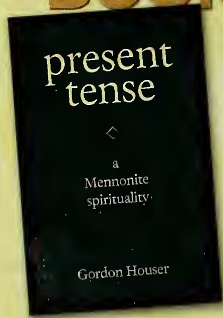
**How the Church Betrays the Gospel: The Unreasonable Dimension of the Teaching and Example of Jesus** and **Holy Experience: Making a Life That Honors Mystery: A Guide for Spiritual Direction** by Garland Robertson seeks to bring to the surface of Christian tradition and practice the substance of the mission that defined the ministry of Jesus. Contact the author at P.O. Box 303515, Austin, TX 78703, glaruerobertson@gmail.com.

**Kindred Spirit: A Collection** by Carrie Newcomer (Rounder Records, 2012, $11.49) collects 19 songs from Newcomer's catalog and includes two previously unreleased songs. Her music explores the intersection of the spiritual and the daily.

**Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African** by Lamin Sanneh (Eerdmans, 2012, $24) tells the story of Sanneh's fascinating journey from his upbringing in an impoverished village in West Africa to education in the United States and Europe to a distinguished career teaching at the universities of Yale, Harvard, Aberdeen and Ghana.

**The Jesus Tribe: Grace Stories from Congo's Mennonites 1912-2012** (Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2012) is a project of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission that marks the centennial of Mennonite witness in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It collects brief stories of Congolese Mennonite Christians.

## Books from the editors



***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

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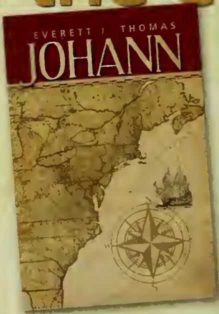
Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
*—Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners



Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

$8.95

Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
*—John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

*Johann* was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
*—Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

# God sightings

*There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.*—Philippians 1:6 (The Message)

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*—Romans 8:28. (TNIV)

God is at work in the world to redeem and reconcile it, making all things new. Our mission in the world is to align ourselves with God's reconciling work. But how can we know with confidence what God is doing?

David Miller, a professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., speaks of "tracking God" as one of the core tasks of the missional church. He employs the analogy of hunters, who often rely on clues to help them find wild game. A tuft of hair on a thorn bush, scratches on the side of a tree, a torn leaf—all point to the presence of animals passing through. So, too, God leaves subtle but visible clues.

What then are the signs that God has been passing through an area, or that God has been at work?

Jesus told Nicodemus that "the wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

We can of course tell when the wind is blowing through the trees—especially when the leaves and branches are waving wildly. We can't see the wind, but we can see its effects. Jesus is saying that we can't see the Spirit of God, but we can see its effects.

In her research regarding the missional church, Lois Barrett of AMBS discovered that many Christians, including Mennonites, find it difficult to speak of God as the subject of an active verb. She says this is true even when people are invited to respond to a direct question, such as, "What has God been doing in your life?" From my point of view, all the following responses would meet Lois' criteria:

"Last week, God was with me during a very difficult transition at work."

"When I was 20 years old, Jesus rescued me from a destructive lifestyle. I've been walking with him ever since."

"At the time I was at a loss for words, but the Holy Spirit gave me the words to say."

"God surprised us by bringing a group of Hmong immigrants to our church who have helped us develop a new outreach."

"The Spirit convicted me about the need for a Sabbath, so I took a day off just to relax."

Barrett says that in response to the question, What has God been doing in your life? we are more likely to say things like:

"Our church started a new outreach to homeless people in the neighborhood."

"I've been attending a Bible study."

"We had a great worship service last Sunday."

"I work as a volunteer for the Mennonite Central Committee sale. We set a new record last Saturday."

Do you notice the difference between the two sets of responses? The former depicts God as the actor or initiator in a situation, whereas the latter puts humans in the driver's seat.

I'm grateful to Lois for sensitizing me to the difference between these two ways of speaking.

Jesus is saying that we can't see the Spirit of God, but we can see its effects.

Ever since, I've been listening to testimonies at a deeper level all across the church. And I've been reading the Bible with new eyes for the "God sightings" throughout Scripture. Now, when I read verses like Philippians 1:6 or Romans 8:28, a sense of God's action leaps off the page.

I'm so intrigued by this concept that I'm going to tell stories of "God sightings" in this column for the next months. You can be confident that God will be the subject of many active verbs.

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# Conflict is normal

Everett J. Thomas

*Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats and act in a nondefensive, nonreactive way.*—from Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love

Like most newspapers and magazines, we have allowed letter-writers wide latitude to say whatever they wish on the pages of this magazine. Consequently, some letters have been judgmental and reactive. We recognize that such a policy has not always been edifying to the church and have decided to change it.

During its October 2012 meeting, the board of directors for *The Mennonite* asked for a change to the letters policy. Specifically: Publish only letters written with a positive tone—even if the letter is offering a critique. The challenge, however, will be in deciding whether a letter is edifying in its tone and content. That will be the responsibility of the editorial team.

While some of the most negative letters are in response to the editorials I write, this is not a defensive move. The editor of our denominational magazine must be open to correction, especially when addressing controversial issues. Now, we will not publish letters that are mean-spirited and serve no positive purpose. Here's an example from the beginning of one letter last year:

We will publish letters written with a positive tone—even if the letter is offering a critique.

"I see a few people in the pictures in your February issue who are not obese. Are these people really Mennonites? Obesity seems to be a Mennonite value. Have you covered this topic in your rag?"

It is within this slightly more controlled environment, then, that we also lift the 13-year moratorium we have had on letters and articles that address Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality. There are numerous reasons for doing so.

First, we think it is possible to have civil and loving disagreements in the church, and those disagreements can be reflected on the pages of *The Mennonite*.

Second, some readers think we no longer have a moratorium because we publish news stories of congregations or pastors disciplined for various reasons by the area conference to which they belong. These reasons include discipline for pastors performing same-sex covenanting ceremonies.

Third, some readers think we have had the moratorium so the church can quietly change its convictions around sexual practices. These readers want us to publish articles that reinforce the church's teaching position rather than being silent about it.

We lift the moratorium with some additional conditions (beyond the tone of an article or letter). If a letter-writer is responding to an article we've published, we reserve the right to have the author of the article respond to the letter-writer in the same issue. We also will limit the number of letters we will publish on issues related to sexuality and not publish a letter that repeats what was said earlier by someone else.

One of the best documents adopted by our church is also seldom referenced in our articles or by letter-writers: Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love (available at mennoniteusa.org/resources). It begins this way: "Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. … Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict, we can work through to growth."

We acknowledge that conflict is normal and affirm that God walks with us through conflict. We invite you to do so also.—*ejt*

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- Death and spirituality
- Rape in the military
- The real and the foolish

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Psalm 24:1, Romans 5:1-5, Philippians 3:20-21, Ephesians 2:14-22

## Special offerings at Phoenix 2013

- **Support the DREAMer Fund.** This fund provides help with application fees for undocumented young adults as they apply for U.S. DREAM Act deferment. Partner with us to meet our goal of $15,000 to help 50 young Mennonites realize their dreams.

  If your group is not planning to attend our 2013 convention, consider supporting the DREAMer Fund directly. For more information, visit **www.mennoniteusa.org/executiveboard/immigration/**

- **Support the creation of the new "Shine" Sunday school curriculum** by MennoMedia and Brethren Press. The new curriculum will supplant the highly successful 'Gather Round series.

Congregations, youth groups and delegates are asked to bring their offerings to the Phoenix gathering.

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**PHOENIX**

Mennonite Church USA convention **2013**

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TheMennonite February 2013 | Volume 16, Number 2

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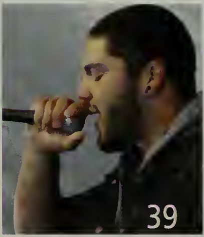
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ON THE COVER: Photo by Everett J. Thomas

**TheMennonite**
February 2013 | Volume 16, Number 2

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

### Inconsistent on issues

Three and a half years ago, Everett Thomas had an editorial entitled, "Don't Abort the Truth" (June 2, 2009) in which he said, "Mennonite Church USA can help change the national debate about abortion by insisting that all of life is sacred from conception to natural death. Those who claim to be pro-life can be so only if they are as concerned about the lives of convicted criminals or soldiers as they are concerned about the lives of unborn babies. The conviction that all life is sacred needs to come 'full-term' and be born as a whole and healthy truth."

If this is the truth, why has the church been so silent on the killing of the innocent unborn when violence in the womb far exceeds any other killings—be they in electric chairs, on the battlefield, in schools or however?

Mennonite Church USA leaders decry pro-life Christians who are not pacifists. But our leaders are just as inconsistent with prolific articles against violence outside the womb, while being completely silent about abortion. To have an official statement hidden away in a document and then remain silent about abortion year after year means that killing the unborn is not as important as Thomas has implied it is.

Is it true that we don't want to be strong pro-life advocates because we don't want to be at peace with our sisters and brothers in Christ who are not exactly like us on peace and justice issues? We are told that to agree to disagree in love on the homosexual issue is putting our peace and reconciliation theology into practice. But where is our peace and reconciliation theology with the evangelicals?

It seems we are as inconsistent in our faith as any other Christian group. So why point a finger at those who are not of the same mind-set as us on the issue of pro-life and all applications of nonviolence?—*Stan Kauffman, Pellstone, Mich.*

### It takes everyone

Thanks for doing the story about Judy and Steve Harder and the birth of Iglesia Evangélica Ágape in Mountain Lake, Minn., in the December 2012 issue. It was well done. I love it when so many different parts of the denomination are able to build something together. Partners here certainly include the Harders and the local community, Central Plains Mennonite Conference, as well as staff from Mennonite Mission Network, Executive Board and Mennonite Education Agency. I'm sure I missed someone.

But I appreciate the idea that this process was led by a genuine understanding that this work we're engaged in is larger than any one agency or churchwide ministry. It takes everyone, and God is able to use and bless the cooperative effort.—*Ken Gingerich, development associate, Mennonite Education Agency; art director, Mennonite Church USA Executive Board*

### Repentance, not penance

Felix Manz, the first of the Anabaptist martyrs in Zurich, Switzerland, penned a final statement that is one of the most eloquent and profound in our tradition. As sung in the *Ausbund*, the ninth verse contains the following phrase, "wirckt Büss mit reinem Hertzen." In *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969), in "I Sing With Exultation," this phrase was translated as, "With heart made pure do penance."

In discussions with native German

speakers, including at a theology faculty in Zürich, I've come to the conclusion that the translation is wrong. "Penance" would be in line with Catholic tradition. "Repentance" is linguistically accurate and in line with Anabaptist theology.

The difference between these two concepts is a central aspect of the Reformation and to the rediscovery at that time of biblical Christianity through the Anabaptist movement. And the issue is with us today: Do we earn our way to heaven, or is salvation received as a gift after repentance and placing our faith in Jesus Christ? My suggestion for the *Hymnal* is to simply replace "penance" with "repent."—*Jon Ebersole, Zurich, Switzerland*

## Thanks

Just a note to tell you how much Merle and I enjoyed and appreciated the December 2012 issue of *The Menno-nite*. I especially was blessed by Everett Thomas' editorial "God Needs Marys." Thanks.—*Rebecca Sommers, Goshen, Ind.*

## Rethink costs of education

I wonder if you have had any stories about what appear to be out-of-control costs of a Mennonite university/college education? I think our local university, Eastern Mennonite University, is now at about $38,000 a year. Since an undergraduate degree no longer assures a young person of getting a job and since costs are so high, we may need to rethink our justification of a denominational institutional education.—*John N. Keim, Harrisonburg, Va.*

## Response from MEA

College affordability is an extremely important area that concerns all our Mennonite higher education institutions. Our institutions work hard to keep costs down, provide high academic standards and work individually with applicants from all socioeconomic levels to find ways to make the college experience affordable.

Although people typically look at the sticker price, that is not the most accurate indicator of what the cost would be. The majority of our students receive considerable financial aid, so the bottom line cost is much lower than the sticker price. In the last number of years our schools have increased financial assistance significantly in an attempt to respond to the economic realities facing many of our students and their families.—*Carlos Romero, executive director, Mennonite Education Agency*

## Day of the Dead is pagan

Having recently joined the Mennonite church, I now regret my decision after reading the article promoting the "Day of the Dead" ("Day of the Dead Offers Living Voices," December 2012)—an openly pagan ritual dating back 2,500 years—with prayers said for the dead and a day at the cemetery. I joined for the peacemaking stance, but there's no way I'm going to remain in a church that condones the shameful worship of a pagan ritual full of skulls, food for the dead and all the shams that Christ came to deliver us from. Please remove my name from your magazine membership as I no longer will attend the local Mennonite church for the same reason.—*Chris Wood, Sarasota, Fla.*

## Response from Bethel College

Like many Christian holy days, including Christmas and Easter, the celebration of el Dia de los Muertos has roots in pre-Christian traditions.

Today, however, the heart of this observance can be found in 1 Corinthians 15: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Father Juan Garza of Our Lady of

*Continued on page 54*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Several months ago, Executive Board staff member Joanna Shenk brought Mark Van Steenwyk through the Elkhart, Ind., offices, introducing him to many staff members. He left a copy of his book, *That Holy Anarchist*. After reading it, we decided to have Shenk do a profile of Mark for a cover story (page 12).

"I am a Christian and an anarchist," Mark says, "because I believe Christianity can teach anarchists about love, spirituality, forgiveness and grace. And because anarchists can remind Christians of the radical political and economic implications of the way of Jesus."

Isaac Villegas and Ron Adams cowrote the article "Post-Christendom or Neo-Christendom?" (page 21) as a rebuttal to claims made by Stuart Murray in *The Naked Anabaptist*.

"Murray leads us astray," they write, "when he announces the imminent demise of Christendom and discusses the Christian's marginality to mainstream society. ... To proclaim Christendom's death prematurely only serves to mask all the ways we benefit from the institutional prominence of cultural Christianity as it shapes our society."

This is the year for Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention, and this issue carries several articles that focus on the gathering in Phoenix in July. However, convention staff elected not to offer a package of articles describing convention plans. Instead, they present a two-page description of optional events and the lineup of speakers for both adult and youth conventions (page 18).

In the news section we report on a Jan. 9-11 Executive Board meeting in Phoenix that featured a lively debate about some administrative updates to denominational membership guidelines and whether to send the updates to the delegate assembly at Phoenix (page 32).—*Editor*

## Stutzman reappointed to three-year term

ELKHART, Ind.—The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA has appointed Ervin R. Stutzman of Harrisonburg, Va., to a second three-year term as executive director of Mennonite Church USA. The new term began Jan. 1. The appointment was made at a Dec. 18, 2012, board meeting following a review that included input from executive conference ministers, members of the cabinet and the Executive Board.

The review showed widespread appreciation for Stutzman as a strong servant leader in his role as chief staff person for the national conference. There was significant affirmation for his being present in area conference settings across the country, his listening skills, his passion in preaching and his continued focus on the Purposeful Plan, which was supported by delegates at the Pittsburgh 2011 Delegate Assembly to be the plan and focus of the national body. Stutzman provided leadership in developing the plan after conversations across the church at the beginning of his first term.

During his second term, Stutzman plans to emphasize the Purposeful Plan, giving particular attention to youth and young adult ministry, planting more peace churches and exploring ways the church is engaging people of other-than-Christian faith.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Photo provided

## New discipleship coach named at EMM

During their Southeast Asian wedding celebration, Michelle and Troy Landis laugh with Adelia, Troy's youngest "sister" in his host family. Troy Landis began serving as discipleship coach at Eastern Mennonite Missions on Dec. 17, 2012. Landis oversees EMM's short-term discipleship in mission programs (Kingdom Teams, YES and GO!) and he helps shape cross-cultural mission training for all EMM workers and members of local churches.—*EMM*

## MWC, Catholics, Lutherans talk about baptism

ROME, Italy/BOGOTÁ, Colombia—An international trilateral dialogue between Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans began in Rome, Dec. 9-13, 2012.

According to a joint release issued after the Rome meeting, the overall theme of the five-year process is "Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church." The release further stated: "This innovative trilateral forum will allow the dialogue to take up questions surrounding the theology and practice of baptism in the respective communions."

The three international communions came to the inaugural meeting with a history of bilateral dialogues. They mutually agreed to hold three-way talks on baptism, a topic that had surfaced in earlier exchanges.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and the Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU ) held conversations from 1998 to 2003. This resulted in the report "Called Together to be Peacemakers." Understandings and practices of baptism were among the divergences identified for further study. Mennonites practice adult baptism and Catholics infant baptism, as do Lutherans.

MWC and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) participated in a joint study commission from 2005 through 2008, which resulted in a final report entitled "Healing of Memories: Reconciling in Christ." During these talks, Mennonites and Lutherans agreed that two areas of difference that existed in the 16th century still exist today, namely the relation of Christians to the socio-political order and baptism.

Further, the PCPCU and the LWF have held 11 rounds of dialogue, with the current one focusing on "Baptism and Growth in Communion."—*MWC*

## Hmong groups agree to ministry partnership

HILLSBORO, Kan.—On Nov. 22, 2012, a delegation from North America, including Kuaying Teng of Mennonite Mission Network; Jeff Wintermote, pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, Kan.; Steve Steiner of Kidron, Ohio; Vang Kou Yang, pastor of the Denver Hmong Mennonite Church, and Jonah Yang of Fresno, Calif., president of Hmong Mennonite Churches Mission, met with about 15 church leaders and pastors of the Churches of Christ in Thailand Hmong churches in Khunklang, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. During the meeting, Kuaying Teng taught on Anabaptist history and theology using Palmer Becker's *What is an Anabaptist Christian?*

For over 15 years, North America Hmong Mennonites have been building relationships with Hmong pastors and church leaders in Thailand in hopes of establishing an Anabaptist presence there. This work began with Pastor Shoua Moua of Fresno who had a vision of seeing his Hmong brothers and sisters in Southeast Asia become Christians and follow Christ with an Anabaptist understanding. Through his many trips to Thailand, three Hmong pastors from Thailand eventually came to the U.S. to pastor Hmong Mennonite Churches.

In 2010, differences of opinion during a meeting about a cooperative project between Hmong Mennonite Churches Mission, Mennonite Mission Network and Thai Hmong pastors brought the relationship to a standstill. Teng and Wintermote made visits to Thailand, meeting with Hmong pastors and church leaders in hopes of restoring the relationship.

On Nov. 24, 2012, the group heard the vision of the Thai Hmong churches for supporting their churches and for future church plants. The three groups talked about the break in relationships in 2010. By the end of the meeting, each group acknowledged its part in the misunderstanding and asked for forgiveness. The groups committed themselves to continued dialogue and a ministry partnership.—*Jeff Wintermote*

Everett J. Thomas

## MC USA leaders visit Arizona border fence

Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman, Tina Stoltzfus Schlabach (who will coordinate the convention trips), Executive Board members Kenneth Thompson and Addie Banks (on fence) and Border Links trip leader Rachel Winch visited the U.S.-Mexico border Jan. 11 to talk to recently deported Mexico residents, learn more about the ministries serving undocumented immigrants and reflect on the militarization along the wall that blocks free movement from one country to another. A total of 24 leaders made the day trip.—*Everett J. Thomas*

## Everence to discontinue two small health plans

GOSHEN, Ind.—In December 2012, Everence announced its direction for health insurance and services to members who will be affected in 2014. In communication to its members with health plans, Everence announced:

- Two small health plans, for people under 65 and for small employer groups, will be discontinued in 2014. Everence will help these members move to new insurance options that will be available next year.
- All other health insurance and services will continue to be developed for future growth. Services include Medicare supplement plans for older adults and third-party administration services for organizations, businesses and church denominations.

Everence has been evaluating the impact of national health-care reform on the organization's insurance plans, particularly plans for members under 65 and for small employers. "We believe new state health exchanges or other insurance options becoming available in 2014 will better serve these members," says Larry Miller, president and CEO.

Everence continues to develop and grow other health insurance and services for older adults and large organizations. The number of retiring baby boomers increases every year. For their retirement years, many people choose Everence Medicare supplement insurance plans to cover medical expenses that aren't covered by Medicare. In 2013, Everence will be actively working to expand its Medicare supplement plans into additional states.—*Everence*

## DeBerg named editor of MW USA's *Timbrel*

ELKHART, Ind.—Mennonite Women USA has named Claire DeBerg of Minneapolis as editor of MW USA's bimonthly magazine, *Timbrel*, following the resignation of Patricia Wells Burdette. DeBerg, an active member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, is a graduate of Bethel University, St. Paul, Minn., and the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

DeBerg has worked as project manager for numerous websites, as copywriter and copy editor and as a writing instructor at the University of Northern Iowa. She is a published writer of poetry and prose and a musician.

Burdette completed her work as MW USA editor at the end of 2012. She served for four and a half years as editor, during which time she produced *timbrel*, wrote numerous articles and news releases regarding the work of MW USA and assisted with other writing for the organization.—*Mennonite Church USA*

# Be imperfect

**Sara Dick** is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Have you ever given thanks for your shortcomings? Maybe you said, "Thank goodness for my high blood pressure." Or, "Thank God I'm overweight." Or, "I'm glad I struggle with depression."

Not I. I'm likely to feel like a failure when I don't meet my goals or expectations in life. In many ways, it's ridiculous to celebrate our failures. Yet our shortcomings are often the door that opens to our salvation. Just ask Zacchaeus.

In the Gospel of Luke (chapter 19), Zacchaeus—rather than catching a glimpse of Jesus passing through Jericho—finds himself staring at the watching crowd's backs. He is short, plus nobody likes him because he overcharges them on their taxes to Rome.

Yet for some reason Zacchaeus is eager to meet Jesus. So he hauls his pint-sized, notorious self into a tree for a better view. Jesus sees him, calls to him and says he is coming over for a meal.

In the middle of giving a recent sermon about this story, I noticed something aloud: Zaqueo no habría conocido a Jesús si no fuera de baja estatura y mala reputacion. (If he weren't short and of ill repute, Zacchaeus would not have met Jesus.)

How might my own limitations become my way of connecting with Jesus?

**The fact that I didn't notice** this until mid-sermon hints at how much I struggled to study and preach in a second language. My comment was not the main point of my sermon—it wasn't even in my manuscript—but I returned to the idea over and over in the following week: How might my own limitations become my way of connecting with Jesus? And how might my connection with Jesus change how I relate to others?

In an opening devotion for an antiracism meeting I attended, John Stoesz identified with how Zacchaeus benefited from an unjust system; as a white man, John, too, has benefited from an unjust (racist, sexist) society. Acknowledging his failures to live justly has helped him meet Jesus in people of all colors and ethnicities and to challenge racism within himself and his community.

For all of us, as for Zacchaeus, being aware of our failings is always an opening to salvation—a chance to receive Christ in our hearts, homes and communities. When I can see and accept my shortcomings, I can more easily see Jesus and accept his call.

In *The Gifts of Imperfection* (just the title may make some readers shiver with disdain), social worker and researcher Brené Brown writes that she began by researching shame and fear, eventually realizing that wholehearted living requires accepting and loving oneself fully. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky, Brown says, but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light. Courage, compassion and connection are the three gifts she names that come from being honest and vulnerable. It's as if she were studying Luke 19 instead of interviewing thousands of 21st-century women and men.

**Social science and Scripture** agree on this: We must draw near life with openness rather than with fear, self-protection and excuses, and we often gain more through failure than success.

Oh, how we protest! We make new year's resolutions so that this year we will be different. Still we drink more alcohol or eat more cookies or work more hours to avoid noticing that we are not well. We banish solitude and prayer and intimacy so we can keep Jesus at arm's length.

This doesn't mean we're hopeless causes. It means we're like Zacchaeus and so many others who've managed to awaken from the sleep of sin and fear. Good news.

My stilted sermon in a Spanish-speaking church left me feeling slightly embarrassed. I wondered whether I had said anything of value to those gathered for worship. It wasn't until the next day—after having described the sermon as "clumsy" to several inquiring friends—that I remembered the side comment I had made about Zacchaeus' shortcomings being the key to his salvation.

**It slowly dawned on me** that my last-minute insight might not have been possible had I been working more easily in my native tongue. And if God had worked through my halting Spanish preaching, maybe my other difficulties could open doors to redemption, too.

May God be at work in each of us through our shortcomings and our failures. ¡Aleluya! And hallelujah! TM

# The gift of vulnerability

In May 2012, more than 200 people from nearly 50 different countries gathered at a retreat center close to Basel, Switzerland, for the triennial meeting of the Mennonite World Conference General Council. The gathering was a significant opportunity for the important business of sharing reports, clarifying budgets and establishing priorities. Also, the newly established MWC commissions pressed forward with their work, and participants enjoyed times of shared worship, singing, Bible study and teachings.

But around the edges of the formal meetings a host of smaller stories were also playing themselves out in ways that did not make it into the official minutes. For a group that does not have many formal ecclesiastical structures, these small threads of connection—the unexpected encounters of individuals, cultures and circumstances—create a space for the Holy Spirit to be present in a transformative way and help form the warp and woof of a global fellowship. Here is one example.

**On May 27,** the Sunday following the conclusion of the meetings, many Mennonite congregations in the region invited participants to take part in their worship services. Walter Ortiz had been asked to give the sermon at the Ingolstadt congregation in Germany, a six-hour train ride from Basel. Walter is a member of the Enlhet tribe, an indigenous group in Paraguay, and the head of the Convención Evangélica Hermanos Menonitas Enlhet. Though fluent in Spanish and several local languages, Walter spoke no German or English, and he had no experience traveling alone in a European context. On Friday evening, the day before his departure, he spent much of the night on his knees praying that God would send someone to help him navigate the trip. The next day, Walter walked to the nearby bus stop with an assurance that God would answer his prayer.

Johan Teichroeb Rempel grew up in an Old Colony family in Chihuahua, Mexico. As a young man, however, he shifted his membership to the Conferencía Menonita de Mexico—a progressive group and strong supporter of MWC, which has nonetheless maintained close ties with its conservative Old Colony neighbors. Johan, who is fluent in German, Plautdietsch, Spanish and English, served as a delegate to the MWC General Conference and had decided to visit friends in Germany following the conclusion of the sessions. On Saturday morning, he joined a throng of people at the bus stop, waiting to launch the first leg of his trip to Ingolstadt. Although the two men had never met, Walter approached Johan confidently and asked if he would accompany him to Ingolstadt. Shocked by the apparent coincidence, Johan quickly agreed, and the two men journeyed together, enjoying a rich conversation along the way.

**In his sermon** the following morning, Walter shared openly his sense of helplessness in the face of the daunting trip to Ingolstadt and the subsequent assurance he had received from God that someone would help. He also mentioned that during the time of the General Council meetings, torrential rains in the Paraguayan Chaco had flooded the Enlhet settlement where he lived, destroying his home and sweeping away most of his possessions. But here, too, Walter insisted, he was assured that God would provide for his people in their time of weakness.

Walter walked to the bus stop with an assurance that God would answer his prayer.

Following the sermon, someone in the Ingolstadt congregation suggested that a basket be made available in case anyone wanted to make a contribution in support of Walter and his community. The spontaneous offering totaled nearly $2,400. At lunch, a guest of the family hosting Walter and Johan noted that it would not be difficult to drop off Walter at the Frankfurt airport on their way home, thereby resolving one more obstacle as Walter thought about the long journey back to Paraguay.

**All of us would agree** it is not good to be alone in an alien culture and that floods are unwelcomed catastrophes. But circumstances of vulnerability can also become occasions for the gifts of God's people to be revealed in surprising ways. Walter shared the gift of trust and gratitude; Johan offered the gift of cross-cultural bridge-building; the Ingolstadt congregation gave of its hospitality and resources. Such is the body of Christ—a living, breathing organism knit together by 1,000 relationships of love.

When have you offered the gift of vulnerability? When have you made yourself available to someone else in need? When have you spontaneously shared your time or money? TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

# Torture doesn't work, in spite of what movies say

For years it's been common knowledge that the CIA practices torture but won't admit to it. Officials in the George W. Bush administration, notably Vice President Dick Cheney and CIA director Michael Hayden, have defended the use of torture in investigation of terrorists.

Then, on Dec. 13, 2012, the Senate Intelligence Committee approved a report concluding that "harsh interrogation measures used by the CIA did not produce significant intelligence breakthroughs," writes Greg Miller in the *Washington Post* (Dec. 14, 2012).

The Democrats on the committee adopted the 6,000-page document over the objections of the committee's Republicans (big surprise), even though the CIA's use of waterboarding and other severe interrogation techniques were banned four years ago.

The report is significant, nevertheless, because it is independent and details the agency's efforts to "break" dozens of detainees through physical and psychological duress.

Some question the relevance of the report because, writes Miller, "the agency abandoned its harshest interrogation methods years before President Obama was elected, and the Justice Department began backing away from memos it had issued that had served as the legal basis for the program."

Still, the report is important because it confronts a popular perception, predominant in many movies and TV shows, that such torture does produce helpful information. The recent film *Zero Dark Thirty* is a case in point.

The film chronicles the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden after the September 2001 attacks and his death at the hands of the Navy S.E.A.L. Team 6 in May 2011. (See my capsule review on page 53.) It shows torture in its graphic horror. Yet it also depicts CIA agents obtaining information from detainees who have been tortured, though the information comes when the detainees are being fed or treated kindly.

Evidence shows that useful information rarely comes from torture. Treating detainees kindly and building trust has been shown to be much more effective in obtaining accurate information. For example, read *The Looming Tower: Al-Quaeda and the Road to 9/11* by Lawrence Wright (Knopf, 2006), which shows an FBI agent obtaining information after developing a relationship with a prisoner and gaining his trust.

The film also depicts the use of secret prisons around the world where detainees were sent to be interrogated, i.e., tortured. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., chair of the committee, issued a written statement that called the decisions to use these secret prisons "terrible mistakes."

While all but one of the Republicans on the committee opposed the report, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who was a prisoner of war in Vietnam, issued a statement saying the committee's work shows that "cruel" treatment of prisoners "is not only wrong in principle and a stain on our country's conscience but also an ineffective and unreliable means of gathering intelligence."

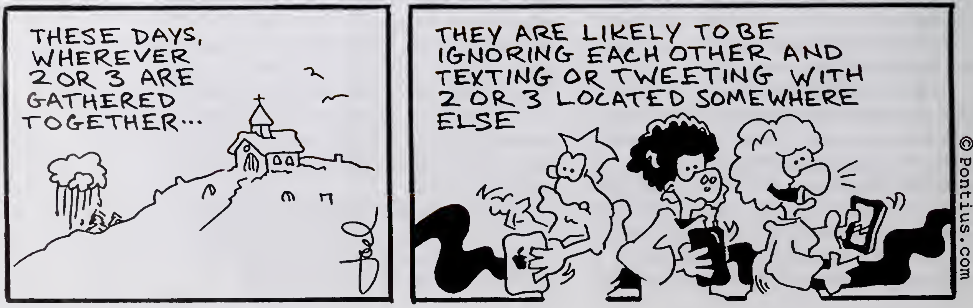
No one knows when or if the report will be made public. For now, it has been turned over to the Obama administration and the CIA to provide a chance for them to comment, writes Miller.

Miller reports that "earlier this year, the Justice Department closed investigations into alleged abuses, eliminating the prospect that CIA operatives who had gone beyond the approved methods would face criminal charges."

While any final report may not have much impact on government practice, it could help counter the public perception, based mostly on fictional treatments, that torture is effective.
—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


THESE DAYS, WHEREVER 2 OR 3 ARE GATHERED TOGETHER...
THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE IGNORING EACH OTHER AND TEXTING OR TWEETING WITH 2 OR 3 LOCATED SOMEWHERE ELSE

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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

“My Jihad is to build friendships across the aisle. What’s yours?”—Ahmed Rehab, who started an ad campaign on San Francisco buses aimed at trying to change public perception of the word “jihad,” which he says has been distorted by extremists, Muslim and anti-Muslim alike

## Churches told to quiet down or pay up

Government officials in East Africa are cracking down on noise pollution, telling church leaders to reduce worship-related noise levels or face penalties—including being shut down. Rwanda’s capital, Kigali, is enforcing penalties after receiving “overwhelming complaints” of “deafening noise from churches,” where charismatic worship services often involve loud music. Meanwhile, Uganda’s capital, Kampala, has drafted legislation to reduce noise levels, prompting protest from many churches. Others are pursuing measures, such as soundproofing their worship centers, in order to comply.—*Christianity Today*

## Unbelief is now the world’s third-largest ‘religion’

A new report on global religious identity shows that while Christians and Muslims make up the two largest groups, those with no religious affiliation—including atheists and agnostics—are now the third-largest “religious” group in the world. The study, released Dec. 18, 2012, by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, found that more than eight in 10 (84 percent) of the world’s 7 billion people adheres to some form of religion, while “nones”—those who say they have no religious affiliation or say they do not believe in God—at 1.1 billion make up 16 percent.—*Religion News Service*

55.3

the average temperature in the contiguous United States in 2012, breaking the 1998 record by a full degree Fahrenheit.

—*New York Times*

## How to fight diabetes with better policy:

**1. Combat poverty**

People who make $15,000 or less are three times more likely to have diabetes than people who make $50,000 or more, regardless of race.

**2. End junk food subsidies**

Between 1985 and 2010, the price of beverages sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup dropped 24 percent, while the price of fresh fruits and vegetables rose 39 percent.

## Do 4 things to cut your risk of diabetes by 93 percent:

**1. Eat healthy**

The lowest rates of Type 2 diabetes in the world occur in populations consuming a whole-foods, plant-based diet.

**2. Lose weight**

**3. Exercise**

Overweight people walking 150 minutes a week can reduce the risk of developing diabetes by nearly 60 percent.

**4. Stop smoking**—*Yes! Magazine*

### Numbers to ponder

- Number of guns confiscated at U.S. airports in 2012: **1,500**
- Number of guns confiscated at U.S. airports in 2011: **1,300**
- Percentage of guns confiscated: **85**

—*Associated Press*

## 80 percent of world is religious

A new, comprehensive demographic study of more than 230 countries and territories conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life finds that more than eight in 10 people worldwide identify with a religious group. The report estimates that there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84 percent of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion.—*Pew Forum*

## Faith on the Hill

The newly elected, 113th Congress includes the first Buddhist to serve in the Senate, the first Hindu to serve in either chamber and the first member of Congress to describe her religion as “none,” according to a new analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life of congressional data compiled primarily by CQ Roll Call. This continues a gradual increase in religious diversity that mirrors trends in the country as a whole.—*Pew Forum Communications*

35%

of all American motels are owned by immigrant families from one Indian state, Gujarat.

49%

of garbage in the California cities of Richmond, Oakland, San José and South San Francisco comes from fast-food trash.

1%

of Vermont residents are black.

10%

of Vermont prisoners are black.

—*Pacific Standard*

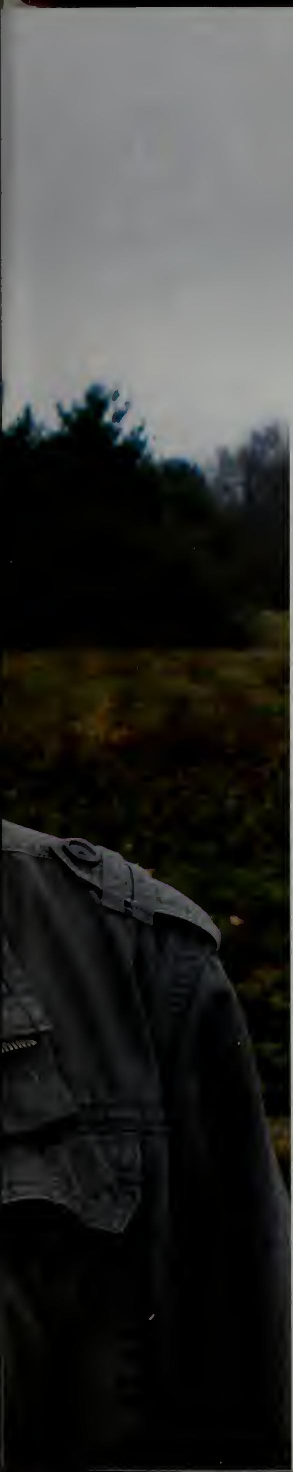
### Mark Van Steenwyk's journey to radical Christian community

# A Mennonite anarchist

Interviewed by Joanna Shenk

Mark Van Steenwyk, originally from Becker County, Minn., lives in Minneapolis with The Mennonite Worker community. The Mennonite Worker (formerly Missio Dei) has been affiliated with Central Plains Mennonite Conference since 2007. I got to know Mark when I began working with Mennonite Church USA in 2009. Since then we have worked together on a variety of projects, including The Iconocast podcast and *Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship*, to which he contributed a chapter. In this interview I was interested to learn more about the journey that led Mark to become Mennonite. His testimony offers encouragement and challenge to Mennonites today.

Mark Van Steenwyk Photo by Everett J. Thomas



**Did you grow up with a Christian identity? What were formative childhood experiences related to faith?**

My family was functionally irreligious in my childhood. I'd visit Sunday schools from time to time, but it wasn't until my early teens that I began to explore Christianity. A particular formative spiritual experience happened when I was 14 and attending a Bible camp in rural Minnesota.

Camp Joy had a campfire the final evening, right after the talent show. As the campfire blazed, a counselor led us in songs, and between them campers were encouraged to share testimonies. On this particular evening in the summer of 1990, most of the stories were depressing. Everyone shared melancholy stories of death and disappointment, of loss and regret.

In the midst of it all, I suddenly felt overwhelmed with a feeling that I had never before experienced. It was as though their pain was my pain. I felt connected to the suffering of the other campers and, even more confusing, to the suffering of the world. Nothing in my life had prepared me for that experience. It wasn't merely a feeling of empathy—it felt cosmic. It didn't feel abstract either; I felt as though I could feel the woundedness of the world. And the most painful part of that experience was that I knew, deep in my being, that I was a part of that. I was broken and incomplete. And I sobbed.

I felt connected to the suffering of the other campers and, even more confusing, to the suffering of the world.

Sobbing isn't the sort of thing a 14-year-old is supposed to do in front of peers. My camp counselor noticed my tears. He took me aside. He handed me a handkerchief, and asked me, "Would you like to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?"

I didn't know what that had to do with what I was experiencing but assumed he knew more about these things than I did. I said yes. He then led me through the "sinner's prayer."

Looking back, I regret saying yes. While I love Jesus and affirm the spiritual nature of that campfire experience, I don't believe what I was experiencing can be described as "being convicted of sin." It was different—something that required discernment. However, the end result was that my mystical experience was pushed and shaped into the easy template afforded by evangelicalism.

**How were you taught to think about your identity as a Christian after that experience?**

Well, when I returned from camp, I was given a Bible. I was told to start reading in the Gospels. Since I was a bookish kid, I dove in. I read through the entire New Testament.

The strange thing is that I immediately came to a radical conclusion from the Gospels: that killing and hating and acquiring wealth were counter to the gospel.

I didn't know my conclusions were out of step with my fundamentalist charismatic congregation until one morning in Sunday school, when I offered to pray for the vets in our congregation—that God would forgive them for the killing they had done in the war.

Ethics—how we live out the life of Jesus in our world today—is at the center of what it means to be a Mennonite.

And, shortly after that, I rebuked a youth worker who came to church driving a brand new, cherry-red Corvette. My rebuke was certainly lacking in charity, but I still think it was fair to critique the purchase, particularly because Becker County is a relatively impoverished place.

The response to all these early radical impulses was basically exorcism. Oh, they didn't call it that—they called it "deliverance." For several hours, I had the spirits of poverty and rebellion "cast out" of me. My radical instincts were cast out of me like demons. And so I became a good conservative charismatic youth.

**As you got older, did the spirits of "poverty and rebellion" return, leading to a faith crisis at some point?**

Yes. It was a combination of things that hit all at the same time of my life. Right around the year 2000, I started studying church history. I was overwhelmed by the corruption and violence found in so much of it. Around that time, I was considering seminary and enlisting with the Air Force with the intention of becoming a chaplain.

I started asking, Am I personally OK with killing? It was still an open question when 9/11 happened. I saw the Christian community capitulate to the will of a government bent on war. And I had been an adamant supporter of George W. Bush. But for some reason, it seemed obvious that the government was telling lies to justify war. Here I was, a Bush supporter, seeing obvious lies, while the church in America called for bloodshed.

All this pushed me toward pacifism. I began to realize, at the same time, that I didn't have any theological use for Jesus besides his sacrificial death. I began to question everything, which led me to re-engage the teachings of Jesus. I became convinced that what he said and taught should be at the center of my faith.

STOP
STOP POISON

Mark and his son Jonas protest fracking. Photo by Josh Miller

**What led up to you starting an intentional community in Minneapolis? What kinds of challenges did you face as a leader?**

In 2005, Amy, my spouse, and I formed Missio Dei (we recently changed our name to The Mennonite Worker) with a simple premise; we would simply read the Gospels and ask three questions: (1) What is Jesus saying or doing in this passage? (2) What excuses are stirring in our minds as a way of justifying why we shouldn't do likewise? (3) What is at least one thing we can do to walk in the direction of what Jesus is saying or doing?

These questions eventually led us into becoming an intentional community that centered its life around the practice of hospitality. The approach was largely experimental; there were no preset notions of what it should look like to follow the way of Jesus. Now, this was a messy process. We didn't start as an intentional community but as a "hip" urban church. And we were doing fairly well with that. However, as our church slowly grew, it was comprised primarily of commuters. Only a handful of us lived in the neighborhood.

About a year into things, I scrapped it all and started over. This was a difficult decision. It appeared so foolish; why scrap what could be a successful church plant in order to start over? The only folks who continued on with us were ones receiving hospitality at our house and a couple friends.

**Were you finding support for your community from other Christian groups as this shift was happening?**

No. Before the "shift," we were affiliated with the Baptist General Conference. Nobody there supported us becoming an intentional community. And we simply didn't know any groups out there who were exploring the same radical ideals we were.

**When did you first hear about Mennonites?**

I knew Mennonites in high school. And, interestingly enough, the pastor of the church I attended in my teens was a Mennonite who had been kicked out of his church in the wake of the charismatic movement. I was rebaptized by a charismatic Mennonite. I like to tell Mennonites that this fact makes me technically more "anabaptist" than anyone I know.

For most of my life, Mennonites were just a group of old-fashioned Christians with strange beliefs. They lived, for the most part, in history.

As my community began to feel isolated, and I felt alone as a leader, I reached out. At this point in my life—about six years ago—I knew there were Mennonites out there who were keeping the Anabaptist spirit alive. I was familiar with Christian Peacemaker Teams and had read *The Politics of Jesus*. I went to the Mennonite Church USA website, found out there were Mennonite churches in the Twin Cities and sent off an email. That's how it started.

**What compelled your community to seek relationship with Mennonites?**

I initiated it, but my community was on board. At first, there were a few folks resistant to the idea of joining a denomination. We tend toward anti-institutionalism. But for me, it hasn't been about joining a denomination but about placing ourselves within a tradition in which to practice mutual submission.

**What's been life-giving about connecting to Mennonites? What's been demoralizing?**

It's always amazed me how quickly Mennonites get what we're about. It can't be overstated how much this helps our sanity. When we first shifted into an intentional community, I remember trying to explain the shift to some pastors I know. After an hour, they still couldn't wrap their minds around it. The majority of Mennonites I've met understand the gist of The Mennonite Worker in just five minutes. Ethics—how we live out the life of Jesus in our world today—is at the center of what it means to be a Mennonite. That is huge. Many Mennonites share our commitment to active peacemaking; almost all of them respect our commitment to hospitality.

We enjoy our relationships with other Mennonite churches in our area. Faith Mennonite has let us use their facilities for events. We've had friends from Washington Mennonite Church in Iowa teach us how to can food. We get visitors from various Mennonite communities who want to get to know us; we love visitors.

But there have been some demoralizing pieces as well. I've met folks who have been Mennonites for decades who still feel like outsiders. We welcome folks with our words but often push them away with our actions and cultural hang-ups. To be a Mennonite, for me, means accepting the reality that I'll never be as Mennonite as other people. I can handle it because as an educated white man with Dutch ancestry, it isn't a huge cultural leap for me to bridge. And since I get invited to speak at Mennonite gatherings, I have access. But it is discouraging to me that some of the members of my community will always be on the outside of the Mennonite world.

I find it challenging trying to talk about economics with Mennonite folks. We confuse frugality with living simply. To me, living simply in the way of Jesus is about living with our basic needs met so that we can share the abundance of God with others. It's about challenging economic injustices and living into the Jubilee. Many Mennonites don't see how their commitment to peacemaking is at odds with their acceptance of capitalism, wealth and privilege.

> Many Mennonites don't see how their commitment to peacemaking is at odds with their acceptance of capitalism, wealth and privilege.

**What led you to change your name?**

When we started Missio Dei in 2003, we were a hip urban church with a cool Latin name. And the theological concept of "Missio Dei"—God's mission—was important to me.

Over the past eight years, we've found ourselves walking within two traditions. In addition to Mennonites, we've rubbed shoulders with Catholic Workers. We've discovered that while our theological convictions often line up with our ▶

Mennonite siblings, our politics and our practices look like the Catholic Worker movement.

Since Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin sparked the Catholic Worker movement in the 1930s, communities have centered their lives around housing the homeless and feeding the hungry in ways that are direct and personal. Workers live with the folks who receive hospitality. Catholic Workers often embrace an anarchism—trying to tackle injustice directly, show compassion directly, build justice directly.

**What values or commitments guide your community? How were they chosen?**

We are committed to following Jesus' way of simplicity (seeking a sustainable life with a healthy relationship to possessions), hospitality (inviting friends and strangers to share life together), prayer (being rooted in life-giving spiritual rhythms), peace (breaking our addiction to power as we get in the way of violence and injustice) and resistance (naming and challenging oppression wherever we find it as we seek to embody an alternative).

We chose all these by consensus. Hospitality is our "mother value"—it shapes and informs the other values. And communal discernment is the practice that animates all our values.

**How many people live in your community, and how many houses do you have? Describe the rhythm of your life together.**

We have about 20 people living between two households: Clare House and Sattler House. We are a mix of members (folks who have been around at least a year and formally discerned to commit to our way of life indefinitely), long-term residents and guests. There are also six chickens. The youngest person in one of our houses, Clarence, is 9 months old. The oldest participant is Martin. He's in his 60s and has afflicted us with his penchant for puns.

Mark at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. Photo provided

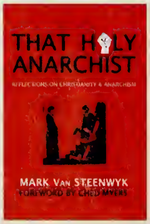
We have several community meals through the week. On Saturday mornings we gather for communal discernment. It's been difficult to cultivate, but more than any other practice it has helped me learn submission and truthtelling.

On Sunday nights we gather at our Oratory–a place of prayer and worship in the space above the garage at Clare House. Our worship is a mix of singing, a short personal reflection or sermon, a healthy dose of Quaker-style silence and prayer. After our time of worship, we go downstairs and gather around the table for an Agape meal.

**In addition to community life, you do speaking and writing. Recently you've authored a book called *That Holy Anarchist: Reflections on Christianity and Anarchism* (see box below). What was the impetus for that book?**

For the past few years, I've given the seminar on Christian anarchism at the annual Jesus Radicals conference. I wanted to have an introduction to the subject in writing. It's hard to be a Christian anarchist. Most Christians don't think it's appropriate to be an anarchist, and most anarchists are atheists. Yet I believe the two can learn a lot from each other.

Anarchists seek to reject or undermine forms of static authority in human relations, recognizing the many forms of oppression (class, race, gender,



**That Holy Anarchist: Reflections on Christianity and Anarchism** by Mark Van Steenwyk (Missio Dei, 2012) is a humble though straightforward defense of Christian anarchism. Van Steenwyk acknowledges that most Christians will simply dismiss anarchism, and most anarchists will simply dismiss Christianity. But he argues that the two strands of interpretations, of approaches to the world, are compatible, even necessary. In a chapter on "Anarchic Impulses in Scripture," he writes: "We read Scripture in ways that support authoritarianism because we learned to read Scripture in authoritarian contexts. Once you start pulling the loose threads, you begin to find the whole authoritarian fabric unravelling." This small book is not a thoroughgoing argument but a stimulus to a discussion that could be fruitful. Christian anarchism is about living according to a kingdom (an "unkingdom," according to Van Steenwyk) that is not one of domination. "The best way forward, ..." he writes, "is to be rooted in the particularity of the story of Jesus and the church." That's a good starting point for a needed conversation.—*Gordon Houser* species) that make up a system of domination.

I am an anarchist because I believe our world works best when we live with a mutuality—when we care for each other and the land without a few people ruling over the rest. I'm a Christian because I believe Jesus shows us a way to do that, and I believe this way is rooted in the source of all life. To me, to be a Christian anarchist is the logical conclusion of taking Jesus seriously when he calls us to love God and neighbor.

**Was there a time in your life when the word "anarchism" would have been jarring for you? How did that change?**

Certainly. But even after embracing what I now know to be anarchist views, I would have reacted to the word. When someone said "anarchist," my brain envisioned someone dressed in black angrily throwing bricks through windows. And there are anarchists who do that.

That changed as I read radical history. The first Anabaptists were, in many ways, revolutionaries. Most were nonviolent, but some were violent. The same is true for the liberation movements around the world. Anarchists are as complex and diverse as the early Anabaptists. And one of the fathers of anarchism, Peter Kropotkin, wrote that anarchism has its roots in the Anabaptist movement.

**How do you see Mennonite faith connected to anarchism?**

Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God has anti-domination, anarchic implications; it also assumes that only by nurturing practices centered on the presence of the living Christ can we move from domination to nondomination, from death to life, from oppression to liberation and from alienation to love.

Mennonites have a rich history of creating small communities that do the "Jesus stuff" directly without outsourcing it. I am a Christian and an anarchist because I believe Christianity can teach anarchists about love, spirituality, forgiveness and grace. And because anarchists can remind Christians of the radical political and economic implications of the way of Jesus.

If we care about homelessness, then rather than simply voting for a progressive candidate or complaining against the wealthy, we should offer someone our guest room or couch. We should become friends with folks who are homeless.

**What gifts do you think the Mennonite tradition has to offer Christians today?**

In a society grappling with economic fallout and inhospitality, Mennonites can teach about our practices of mutual aid and hospitality. Mennonites have theology and history that can help other Christians who are questioning the war machine and social injustices but lack the theology or the ecclesiology to go deeper. We have to share our success and our failures and find a way to support others engaging in a similar struggle.

Folks are emerging into convictions that are similar to Anabaptism. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, and we have an obligation to help them embrace the call of Jesus Christ to live more fully into the kingdom of God. And we should do that without trying to absorb them into our particular Mennonite story.

If we care about homelessness, then rather than simply voting for a progressive candidate or complaining against the wealthy, we should offer someone our guest room or couch.

**What's next for The Mennonite Worker?**

We are raising funds for the purchase of a new hospitality house. We will be looking for a building with at least eight bedrooms and 3,200 square feet. We intend to name the new house Simone Weil House, after the French mystic, philosopher and activist. We've raised about $60,000 so far.

Simone Weil House will provide much-needed space for new guests and interns. The house will host several open meals a week and provide additional garden (and chicken) space.

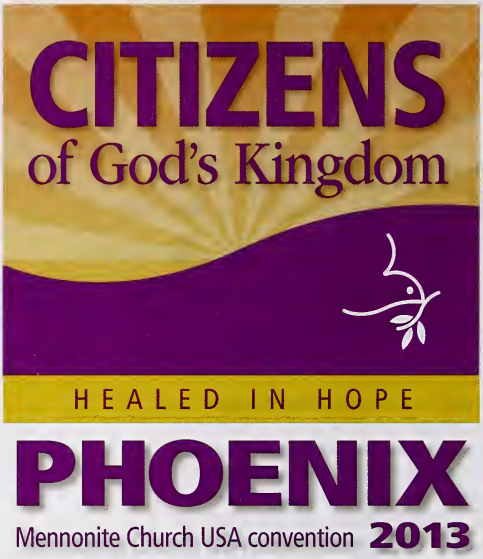
The building serves not only as a hospitality house but also as home to the Gene Stoltzfus Center for Creative Peacemaking. (Gene was director of Christian Peacemaker Teams from its founding until 2004. He passed away in 2010.)

After the new house is established, we'll look at acquiring land for a rural sister community—to provide not only a place for us to grow food for our urban households but to live more into practices of environmental sustainability.

*Joanna Shenk is editor of* Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship *(Herald Press, 2011) and communication coordinator and interchurch relations associate for Mennonite Church USA.*

Here's what to look for at **Phoenix 2013** in July.

# Convention is coming



Mennonite Church USA's next convention in Phoenix, Ariz., is only five months away; it will be held July 1–6 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

## Special events

When registering, note these opportunities:

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tour of Florence Detention Center, followed by a visit to the Florence Project office** (Monday, July 1, 7:30 a.m.–early afternoon, limited to 13 people). **Cost: $20** (lunch not included)

As we gather in Phoenix, we can choose to learn more about the immigration crisis that affects all of us in our various contexts. Perhaps the most invisible part of this crisis is the number of immigrants held in detention centers across the United States. On Monday morning, 13 people will have the opportunity to visit the Florence Detention Center, which is approximately an hour's drive south of Phoenix. The ICE Agency will conduct the visit, and Tina Schlabach, a Mennonite minister from Tucson, will accompany the group.

**All-day learning trip to the U.S./Mexico border with BorderLinks** (Tuesday, July 2, through Friday, July 5, 6 a.m.–9 p.m. daily, limited to 39 people per day). (U.S. passport or U.S. passport card is required if traveling into Mexico.)
**Cost: $125**

Consider giving one of your convention days to an experiential learning opportunity that will bring new insights and perspectives on border migration. Your own questions and background will contribute to the group experience. Tuesday through Friday, 39 people daily will have the opportunity to travel on a charter bus from the convention center two hours south to Tucson. There the group will split into three smaller groups for the day; two groups will cross into Mexico, and the other group will stay on the U.S. side of the border. A leader from Shalom Mennonite Fellowship will help welcome and host the group each day. BorderLinks will guide each group's activities.

**Traveling choir** (limited to 48 people).
**Cost: $15** (to cover transportation)

This choir will travel to several locations throughout Phoenix to sing songs of healing and hope. There will be one rehearsal.

**Servant projects** (available options: 9 a.m.–1 p.m. on Monday; 12–5 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday).
**Cost: $7**

Servant projects have been part of the convention experience for many years. These service experiences allow adults and youth to contribute their time to local ministries and to learn about both the strengths and challenges of the host city.

**Purposeful Plan fund-raising meal** (Tuesday, July 2, 5:30–7 p.m.)

Join executive director Ervin Stutzman, moderator Richard Thomas and agency executives for dinner and conversation about how God is working in Mennonite Church USA, with a focus on the Purposeful Plan and ongoing ministries. **Tickets are $50**, with additional opportunities to provide ongoing financial support for Mennonite Church USA.

**Wet 'n Wild** (Wednesday, July 3). **Cost: $29**

Set on more than 35 acres in North Phoenix, Wet 'n Wild water park is the largest theme park in Arizona and features more than 30 slides and attractions. The cost includes admission and transportation to the park. (Children 2 and under are free.) All children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian.

## Adult worship speakers

- **Monday evening: Richard Twiss**, a member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate from the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, is president of Wiconi International, an organization that works to promote community, strengthen culture and foster spiritual vitality among Native American or First Nations people.

- **Tuesday morning: Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño**, a native of Edinburg, Texas, and a third-generation Methodist, is president of the College of Bishops of the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church. She also has served as a pastor and district superintendent.

- **Thursday evening: Meghan Good**, pastor of Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church, frequently speaks on topics such as biblical hermeneutics, integrative worship and the church's generation gap. She previously worked with Duke Divinity School's Center for Reconciliation (Durham, N.C.) while completing a Master of Divinity degree.

- **Friday evening: Elizabeth Soto Albrecht**, moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA and an ordained pastor, is coordinator of field education at Lancaster (Pa.) Theological Seminary and associate chaplain at Lancaster General Hospital. She has a Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

## Joint worship speaker

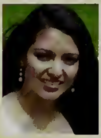
- **Wednesday morning: Ervin R. Stutzman**, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, has served the church as a pastor, district overseer, missions administrator, conference moderator and denominational moderator. He also was a professor and dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va. Ervin holds a Ph.D. from Temple University in Philadelphia.

**It's not too early to make plans to attend. To learn more about convention, register and reserve lodging online, see http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/. (Deposits are $199 per youth, junior youth, sponsor and adult.) And follow us on Facebook and Twitter.**

## Youth worship speakers

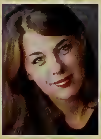
- **Monday evening: Hal L. Shrader**, lead pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., was first drawn to Anabaptism when in college he first considered, What if Jesus was really serious about what he said in the Sermon on the Mount? He has a Master of Theology degree from Pepperdine University, Malibu, Calif.

- **Tuesday morning: Isabel Castillo**, a graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., is the founder of Dream Activist Virginia and co-founder of the National Immigrant Youth Alliance. In May 2011, the University of San Francisco awarded Isabel an honorary doctorate degree for her unwavering advocacy for the passage of the Dream Act.



- **Tuesday evening: Rachel Swartzendruber Miller**, vice president of admissions and financial aid at Hesston (Kan.) College, formerly was director of Convention Planning for Mennonite Church USA. She is a Ph.D. candidate at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

- **Thursday evening: Ingrid DeSanctis and company**. An actor, director, playwright and teacher, Ingrid teaches at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., and is artistic director of Fifth Wall Productions, LLC. She has a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and has worked as an associate director of drama at Willow Creek Community Church.



- **Friday morning: Luke A. Hartman** is vice president for enrollment at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. He has served as a university professor, head basketball coach and administrator of a diverse public school. He has a Ph.D. in educational policy studies at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.

- **Friday evening: Glen Alexander Guyton** is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA. A former officer in the U.S. Air Force, Glen followed a call to ministry and served more than 17 years at Calvary Community Church (C3) in Hampton, Va., with his wife, Cyndi. Glen and Cyndi are now campus pastors of C3-San Antonio (Texas).

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

Serving God is the highest calling anyone can receive. What higher honor could anyone ask for?—Juanita Nuñez

**Juanita Nuñez** serves on the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board. She works as co-pastor with her husband, Eligio, at Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer in Apopka, Fla. She is also an ex-officio member of Iglesia Menonita Hispana general board and a chaplain in Marketplace Chaplains USA. In the past she served as moderator of IMH and as Hispanic Women's Mennonite Conference coordinator.

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**

When I was 5 years old in the Dominican Republic, two humble women left a great impression on me—Benita and Estebania Ramirez. Both of them were in difficult marriage situations, but they held on to their faith and were an inspiration to the whole congregation. When I went to Bible school in 1981, I had the opportunity to meet the director, Maria Luisa Gomez, who took me under her wings.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**

I have a friendship and mentoring relationship with Madeline Maldonado. I have also been able to influence my daughters, Alexandra and Jovanna. Alexandra is currently a leader in a Christian microfinance organization, serving people in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti, where she acts as a leader and a person committed to God.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**

Madeline and I are from different upbringings. I was born in the Dominican Republic, and she was raised in the United States. She is also from another generation of Hispanics growing up with a different culture. Luisa and I currently belong to different denominations. Finally, while my daughter Alexandra and I will always have a parent-child relationship, we have been developing stronger bonds of a caring friendship.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**

First, I am a Hispanic woman of color. Sometimes the fact that I speak English with an accent has an impact on my leadership. Second, serving in a different country from my own has its challenges. Third, the Hispanic community historically has been male-dominated. Some women prefer men in leadership roles, mostly based on past experiences or personality clashes with other women.

**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**

Prayer and knowing God's Word has been an important part of my journey. God is able to see me through all things. My family, my congregation and my friends are a significant part of my life, as they love me and accept me as I am. Serving God is the highest calling anyone can receive. What higher honor could anyone ask for?

**We shouldn't equate the decline of Christian piety with the end of Christendom.**

# Post-Christendom or neo-Christendom

by Ron Adams and Isaac Villegas

We live in confusing times. Perhaps that has always been the case, for in every era the powers and principalities of the world mutate into different forms, inventing new temptations that lead followers of Jesus away from the gospel. Part of what it means to live faithfully involves discerning the signs of the times, paying attention to our ever-changing environment as we repent of the church's failures and renew our witness to the gospel here and now. ▶

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Recently, some have labeled our confusing situation the "post-Christendom era." According to this trend, we are living in an epoch after Christendom. Traditionally, Christendom described the time when the church hierarchy exercised dominion over European society, with the Pope vying for power with the emperor. Stuart Murray, a Baptist in England, explains that during Christendom "Christians had organized themselves into a powerful institution that could impose its beliefs and practices on society."

To declare Christendom's demise hastily misleads us into thinking that Christians are now marginalized victims.

But, it is claimed, since the travails of the 16th century, the church has been losing its hold on society. Murray, among others, argues that Christianity is no longer a dominant influence in the West. Christendom is dead or dying as "the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence." This is the framework Murray offers for redefining contemporary Anabaptism in his recent book, *The Naked Anabaptist* (Herald Press, 2010). We are witnessing the historical moment, writes Murray, when the "Christendom era draws to a close and the churches find themselves back on the margins, no longer feted or favored by society."

"Imperial Christianity is finished," Murray goes on to say, which means Christians should turn to "the resources [that] are to be found in the radical tradition associated with Anabaptism," because Anabaptists, historically, have developed ways of life that operate without the support of Christendom's structures.

Yet Murray leads us astray when he announces the imminent demise of Christendom and discusses the Christian's marginality to mainstream society. We are now "a powerless minority of resident aliens," he writes, "in a culture that no longer accords Christianity special treatment."

**We Mennonites listen to Murray** because he gives us a way to identify ourselves as a minority religious community in the midst of worldly persecution; he taps into our Anabaptist penchant for associating marginality with faithfulness. But the trouble with Murray's claim is that Christianity still dominates Western politics and culture. As Christians, we are not marginalized from the powers that be. To proclaim Christendom's death prematurely only serves to mask all the ways we benefit from the institutional prominence of cultural Christianity as it shapes our society. To declare Christendom's demise hastily misleads us into thinking that Christians are now marginalized victims.

While recent surveys show a decrease in church attendance in the United States, we shouldn't equate the decline of Christian piety with the end of Christendom. There is more to

the dominance of Christendom than regular church attendance. Christendom names a social arrangement in which Christianity penetrates the structures of power. As Murray explains in his book *Church Planting* (Herald Press, 2001), Christendom is a system where "Christians had organized themselves into a powerful institution that could impose its beliefs and practices on society." Our argument is that such an era has not ended, that the era of politically powerful Christian institutions is not dying, that we do not live in a "post" Christendom age. Instead, Christendom is reinventing itself as it mutates into a new form: call it neo-Christendom. This mutation differs from the political system of the Medieval Ages yet retains the same preference for Christian sociopolitical ascendency.

"In Christendom," writes the historian Alan Kreider, "Christians came to occupy central positions in society. ... Christians were no longer deviant." This is still the case in the United States, especially as we consider who citizens vote into the executive office. The rhetoric of last year's presidential race revealed the widespread assumption that only Christians should rule the country. Both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney spoke boldly of their faith on the campaign trail, each trying to identify himself as sufficiently Christian to be elected President. In *The Presidents and Their Faith* (Russell Media, 2012), Darrin Grinder and Steve Shaw document how, in order to win elections, every president has had to be "not just religious but acceptably religious, for it does appear to be the case that we do have a religious litmus test concerning the American presidency."

**Christianity is not a deviant faith** in the United States. Christianity is the status quo for people with power, a prerequisite for presidential electability, the credential required to convince voters of a candidate's political virtue. The office of President has been Christianized. For example, the job description of the person who sits in the oval office involves offering pastoral care to the nation, like a shepherd to the flock. Last year, President Obama offered words of comfort, preaching from Psalm 46, at the memorial service in Tucson, Ariz., as mourners remembered Jared Loughner's victims. After the mass murders in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush used Psalm 23 to reassure a devastated populace with the promise of God's blessing and presence even as evil overwhelms. In 1995, after the Oklahoma City bombing, President Bill Clinton encouraged the crowd with words from Romans 12: "Let us not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good." In these crucial

While pundits may doubt the sincerity of a leader, no one questions the political use of the Christian Scriptures.

moments for this nation, the turn to the Bible is natural to our culture, both socially acceptable and expected. The Christian Scriptures have become an instrument of civil power.

If we lived in a post-Christendom society, a president who quoted from the Bible in a public address would be considered a social deviant, a foreigner to the culture, a politician out of touch with the people. But we do not live in post-Christendom, for the media and the masses approve of presidents when they Christianize their speeches and leadership. While pundits may doubt the sincerity of a leader, no one questions the political use of the Christian Scriptures.

We should actively disown the systems of neo-Christendom that permeate our lives by forming relationships that draw us into the borderlands of cultural Christianity.

**While European societies differ** from our situation in the United States, our nations are infused with the same powers of Christendom because we share a cultural and political genealogy. Given the constant mutations and varying forms, perhaps we should talk about "neo-Christendoms" in the plural, not singular. For despite the significant differences between the United States and Europe, including the disparity in church attendance, the legacy of Christendom still permeates its politics and cultures. In a December 2011 speech, British Prime Minister David Cameron said, "We are a Christian country, and we should not be afraid to say so." The language and culture of Christianity is "the glue that can help to bind us together," Cameron declared. For him, Christendom infuses British identity and promises to bring unity among disparate peoples.

In Switzerland, a so-called secular country, citizens amended their constitution to forbid the construction of minarets on mosques. According to the advocates of the law, the skyline of Swiss towns and cities should display the unambiguous Christian legacy of European civilization, enshrined in church architecture. By popular vote, the Swiss defended the cultural roots of their society in Christendom, warding off the challenge of a growing Muslim population.

The point is unambiguous: Islam must not be allowed to challenge the favored position of Christianity. Robert Louis Wilken, a church historian, explained the significance of the Swiss stance against minarets: "The peoples of Europe apparently still believe in the potency of Christian symbols." Without the privileged position of these Christian symbols in Europe, Wilken continued, society will lose "all memory of its Christian traditions" and may forfeit "those things that make western civilization unique."

The claim that Western civilization belongs to Christianity was defended by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2006 papal address at the University of Regensburg in Germany. "Christianity," he argued, "took on its historically decisive character in Europe." The theology of the early church, "with the subsequent addition of the Roman heritage, cre-

For a perspective that differs from Adams and Villegas, two recent books address Christian practices and how to read the Bible in light of Christendom's "unraveling." **Forming Christian Habits in Post-Christendom: The Legacy of Alan and Eleanor Kreider**, edited by James R. Krabill and Stuart Murray (Herald Press, 2011, $22.99), includes essays and appreciations by contributors from around the world who have been influenced by the ministry of the Kreiders, who have taught and written about mission, community and worship from an Anabaptist perspective for almost 40 years, about half that time living in England. Each chapter includes excerpts from the Kreiders' writings, followed by responses of the contributors. There's much to learn here.

**Reading the Bible After Christendom** by Lloyd Pietersen (Herald Press, 2012, $19.99) argues that the church in a postmodern, post-Christian society needs to look at Scripture with a different focus. He examines how the Bible was interpreted before Christendom and afterward, then how Anabaptists developed an alternative approach that subverted Catholic and Protestant forms. Next, Pietersen turns to reading the whole Bible from this perspective. Finally, he considers contemporary applications in two areas: spirituality and mission. He wisely calls for reading the Bible from the margins and in community. There's much to learn here as well.—*Gordon Houser* ated Europe and remains the foundation of what can be rightly called Europe." Pope Benedict insists on the essential link between European societies and Christianity. While the Pope uses this historical connection to promote the continual dominance of the church, which is not our argument here, he articulates the genetic link that binds Christendom and western societies together. The connection between "Christendom" and "Europe" is so intimate that it seems unnatural to name them as separate identities, as if we could talk about one without the other.

As the anthropologist Talal Asad has put it, "Christianity is regarded as a central tradition in 'the West,' even for atheists, and the constant reinterpretation of its history is part of what 'the modern West' is about." In other words, as citizens of Western societies continue to engage in the kinds of political debate that define their cultural identity, they cannot help but operate within the evolving mutations of Christendom.

Once we leave behind the myth that we live in post-Christendom, we can see at least two possibilities for faithfulness to the gospel, two options that start from a realistic appraisal of our cultural situation within the different forms of neo-Christendom.

**The first option** can be associated with the work of Lesslie Newbigin, the foundational thinker of the missional church movement. According to Newbigin, Christianity saved Europe from social disintegration and political anarchy. It would have been "an act of apostasy," he wrote in *Foolishness to the Greeks* (SPCK Publishing, 1986), for believers to step away from the opportunity "to create a Christian civilization, to shape laws consonant with the biblical teaching." We shouldn't abandon the legacy of Christendom, he argued, but adapt it to the changing times. What we need is "a Christian society," where we maintain "a privileged position for the Christian faith in the public domain," wrote Newbigin in a 1994 essay called "What Kind of Britain?" The alternative to a Christian society, according to Newbigin, even as it subtly grows under the auspices of secularism, is Islam: "I do not wish my grandchildren," Newbigin admitted, "to live in an Islamic state." This fear, it seems, still feeds the powers of neo-Christendom as it lives in the systems of Western societies.

**A second option** has to do with forming relationships of solidarity with minority religious groups, the communities among us that are pushed into the margins of society because of their faith. While the post-Christendom thinkers want us to imagine ourselves as deviants because we are Christians, we want Christians to recognize that we are not foreigners to the powers that be, that we are not social deviants because of our faith in Jesus Christ, that we are not a persecuted minority within the cultural and political systems of western societies. Alternatively, we believe that we should actively disown the systems of neo-Christendom that permeate our lives by forming relationships that draw us into the borderlands of cultural Christianity. Instead of pretending we are "a powerless minority of resident aliens in a culture that no longer accords Christianity special treatment," we should join our lives to actual resident aliens in our society, religious minorities in our Christianized culture, powerless communities that do not benefit from the favoritism of our political systems.

We would argue for the second response, a creative and humble engagement with estranged religious communities and cultures. For example, what would it mean to give up the social power that comes with owning prominent buildings and calling them churches and instead renting space from a local mosque or Sikh temple? Such a relationship would be a small step toward disestablishment within our neighborhoods and communities and an embodied commitment of solidarity with people rendered outsiders to mainstream cultures. To become renters rather than owners would start us on a divergent path from groups who claim institutional and geographic power. Of the many gifts we would receive from the hospitality of minority communities, they could share with us what it feels like to gather for worship on the fringes of neo-Christendom. As we assemble as Christians within the sacred space of Muslims or Sikhs, we would be invited to make ourselves vulnerable to the violence they experience from Christian bigotry. This would be one way to learn from others how Christendom remains a source of oppression and fear, realities hidden from us so long as we live by the illusion that Christendom is dead and gone.

*Ron Adams is pastor at Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church. Isaac Villegas is pastor at Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.*

There are many belief systems in the world today. This reflection embraces the Judeo-Christian faith. Those who embrace faith have also been given much hope. As an introduction, and to give you some insight relative to the spirituality of dying, I will quote a story from Henri Nouwen's book on *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (HarperOne, 2009). It is a story about a conversation between twins in their mother's womb.

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# Death and spirituality

## Making peace with death

by Elena Yoder

*The sister said to the brother, "I believe there is life after birth."*

*Her brother protested vehemently, "No, no, this is all there is. This is a dark and cozy place, and we have nothing else to do but cling to the cord that feeds us."*

*The little girl insisted, "There must be something more than this dark place. There must be something else, a place with light where there is freedom to move." Still she could not convince her twin brother. After some silence, the sister said hesitantly, "I have something else to say, and I'm afraid you won't believe that, either, but I think there is a mother.*

*Her brother became furious, "A mother," he shouted. What are you talking about? I have never seen a mother, and neither have you. Who put that idea in your head? As I told you, this place is all we have."*

*"Don't you feel these squeezes every once in a while? They're quite unpleasant and sometimes even painful. I think these squeezes are there to get us ready for another place, much more beautiful than this, where we will see our mother face to face. Don't you think that's exciting?"* ▶

**This story may help us think about death** in a new way, says Nouwen. We can live as though this life is all we have and the thought of death is absurd and we shouldn't have to take the time to even think about it. Or we can agree with the sister in the story that there must be a Creator, greater than ourselves, and we can "choose to claim our divine childhood and trust that death is but the painful but blessed passage that will bring us face to face with our (Creator) God."

Nouwen's statement means this world is not what it's all about. There is a larger reality out there that we have yet to experience. This recognition may be our first step in the process of making peace with death or our mortality.

Nouwen says that simply recognizing we are dependent on God brings freedom. Whereas human dependency enslaves, divine dependence leads to freedom. "Divine dependence is a gift and makes dying part of a greater and much vaster way of living," writes Nouwen in *Our Greatest Gift*. This freedom allows one to see the whole human race as brothers and sisters and children of the one Creator God, who is perfect love. Thus, he says, "when we can reach beyond our fears to the One who loves us with a love that was there before we were born and will be there when we die, oppression, persecution and even death will be unable to take away our freedom. Once we have come to the deep inner knowledge—a knowledge more of the heart than of the mind—that we are born out of love and will die into love, that every part of our being is deeply rooted in love and that this love is our true Father and Mother, that all forms of evil, illness and death lose their final power over us and become painful, but hopeful reminders of our true divine childhood."

The Apostle Paul's way of expressing this freedom is recorded in Romans 8:35-39: "Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture. ... None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us" (*The Message*).

These verses give us confidence that even in death we are not separated from God's love, and we can walk through life and especially the latter stages of life and through the very gates of death itself with the confidence of abiding in God's love and presence at all times. As David Roper in his book *The Song of a Passionate Heart Psalm 23* (Discovery House, 1996) says: "Death for God's children is not bitter frustration but mere transition into a larger and permanent love—a love undisturbed by time, unmenaced by evil, unbroken by fear, unclouded by doubt."

**The story about the twins** suggests that we are born to die. We are born for a larger reality, a reality that we are blinded to in this present life. This can be compared to mothers giving birth. We do not want the babies in our wombs to be afraid to leave the darkness of those wombs. People who have near-death experiences have often seen beyond the present reality and have given witness to a larger reality. Most of their experiences agree as having encountered feelings of tremendous love, warmth and peace, saying that they will never be afraid of death again.

One young man said to his wife before he died, "It's all about love." Living is about love and the joy of knowing the source of love and belonging to one human family. Dying is also about love because we return to Perfect Love—the One who created us in the first place.

Whereas human dependency enslaves, divine dependence leads to freedom.

Dying, however, is seldom a sweet sentimental event. Rather, it is a great struggle to surrender our lives completely and let go of the familiar and earthly about us, to let go of all we have humanly experienced. It may evoke feelings of fear because the path we are going, we have never before experienced. The common human tendency is to cling to this life, to the known and to the relationships we love.

There are exceptions, however. My own mother, sensing that her life work was completed, begged Jesus to come and take her. Another example is a friend's son, who at college age became deathly sick. It appears that on his hospital bed he had heavenly visitors who prepared him for the journey, and he was ready to leave his sick body. Many dying people experience a deep peace and even before they leave their bodies become aware of their larger reality, seeing God or deceased loved ones. My father-in-law was one of these. He seemed happy, whereas before that he expressed a fear of dying.

In their process of dying, most people seem to get in touch with a larger reality. Some say this is wishful thinking. In his book *Peaceful Dying* (Parselus Books, 1999), Daniel R. Tobin writes, "Perhaps it's something much deeper—a capacity to see clearly for the first time, as the paraphernalia of daily living recedes from vision, what's really there."

As we approach the end of life it is especially important to be in harmony and communion with others, especially family, as much as possible.

**Death is nothing we can practice for** but we can practice achieving and maintaining a sense of peace about it. As we approach the end of life it is especially important to be in harmony and communion with others, especially family, as much as possible. Actually, it can be called keeping our lives updated in our relationships or letting go of our resentments and making peace with those who have hurt us one way or another as much as possible. Life is too short to hold on to resentments and refuse to love. Otherwise, we will have too much to do when the actual time comes. One of the greatest gifts we can give our families is to let them know we have peace with death and give them a good example of how to die. The importance of leaving good or positive memories cannot be stressed enough. Another wonderful gift to give to our families is to think and plan ahead. Talking to our family about this is often not the most desired conversation. However, it is a good teaching method, and the family will be grateful, when the time comes for your departure, to know that you have already made your final plans. They will know exactly what your wishes are.

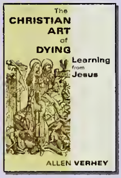
As one gets closer to the end of life, there is a shift in what one sees as important. We see life in a new light and old values and reassess priorities, which tend to change. We focus anew on the deeper meaning of life and begin to realize that all of life's experiences have meaning for us. Things that once seemed crucial will diminish in importance, while other things that were kept on the back burner take on major significance. Processing the meaning of these experiences becomes important and is emotionally hard work.

At this point, it is important that the caregiver or family members have accepted the reality of death and embraced it as a part of life. In this way, they can encourage a deeper sense of peace and tranquility for the dying.

In conclusion, let's remember that it's important that we see dying as a natural and inevitable part of living. It is healthy to befriend death, that is, to think about and process our own ways of looking at it so that when we are confronted with it, we see it not as an enemy or as something we have to fight against. It means we define our own values and priorities and seek to be true to our convictions throughout our lives.

It is good to remember that life and dying are all about love; recognizing and responding to God's love and surrounding ourselves with loving relationships. Edgar Cayce in his book *A Course in Miracles* (Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975) stresses the importance of pure love in our lives. He believes such love is at the core of the universe, the true God, and he is confident that death is simply a return to that core. Let us encourage one another with these thoughts and words.

*Elena Yoder is a hospice chaplain and bereavement coordinator and attends Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.*



Elena Yoder mentions several helpful books in her article on dying and spirituality. Another excellent resource is **The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus** by Allen Verhey (Eerdmans, 2012, $30). Verhey, who teaches theological ethics at Duke Divinity School, experienced a life-threatening illness before writing this book. But this is not a memoir. Instead, he surveys the development of what he calls "medicalized dying" and notes that while medicine has brought progress in treating illness, it has also "prematurely alienated people from their own bodies, from their communities and from God." Then he looks at the 15th-century *Ars Moriendi*, a spiritual self-help manual on the art of dying, which he finds helpful, but "more Platonic than Christian." Verhey then develops a contemporary art of dying that focuses on following Jesus' example, who willingly suffered and died. "If life and its flourishing are not the ultimate goods," Verhey writes, "neither are death and suffering the ultimate evils." Finally, he considers the practices of the Christian community and the practices of dying well and caring well for the dying. "Dying in America is hard work," he writes. "And American Christianity has not helped much." Thanks to Verhey's fine book, we have some help in learning to practice the art of dying.—*Gordon Houser*

### Lessons from Jesus in Luke 10

# Growing pains

by Lynn Parks

The vision statement of Mennonite Church USA says we are to "grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world." But growth brings some challenges.

We have a bamboo plant at our church that is growing out of its container. The roots are crowded and the stalks are close together, with leaves entangling each other. This has become a metaphor for our growing congregation with help needed in many ministry areas. The needs at church and the many responsibilities and activities of our lives make us feel crowded, longing for breathing space. We're suffering from growing pains.

In Luke 10, Jesus deals with this same problem as he takes his disciples from a place of dependence on him and scatters them out into places where they can grow and learn. What can we learn from this story to help us with our own growing pains?

**We need to pray for more workers.** Jesus tells his disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest issue such a compelling command to join in the work of the kingdom that all resistance would be overcome and many would join in the work. We need partners, and developing partnerships among congregations is a priority of Mennonite Church USA. Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs because two can accomplish more together than either one can alone. We are to pray for partners and join together to increase our capacity.

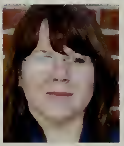
**We are also to be prepared for failure.** Jesus tells his disciples that he is sending them out as lambs among wolves, a scenario with a high chance of failure. He also warns them that there will be people who will not welcome them or their message. They are not to waste time mourning over failure or trying to make things work that aren't going to work. They are to simply move on. Implied in this is the idea that we are to be open to new things. If something is not working, try something else. This is also how new leaders are developed, as we open ministry opportunities up to new people.

**Jesus told his disciples** that when they were welcomed, they were to stay in that place, in the same house, ministering peace and accepting hospitality. There is a sense of rest in their work. They weren't to expend all their energy jumping around from place to place but instead were to concentrate on specific things in one place. Rest restores our energy so we must take time to rest. Practicing Sabbath regularly, taking time for worship and play, is essential for spiritual health.

Practicing Sabbath regularly, taking time for worship and play, is essential for spiritual health.

**After Jesus' disciples return** from their mission, elated that even demons submitted to them in Jesus' name, he tells them not to rejoice so much in what they have done but in who they are. Their names are inscribed eternally in heaven. Focusing on what we have to do, rather than who we are, is sure to drain us. We are to remember that first we are beloved children of God and, as such, we have access to all the authority that has been given to Jesus to overcome the evils in the world. This is foundational to Christian formation, the first priority of our church.

Jesus' disciples had to do all that Jesus was telling them to do. We also have to make room in our lives for what God is telling us to do. As purposeful people, we are to make conscious decisions about how we live our lives based on biblical principles such as practicing Sabbath, partnering together in the work of the kingdom, offering peace and accepting hospitality. In this way we can grow in our capacity as disciples of Jesus.



*Lynn Parks is associate pastor at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia.*

# Post-Christendom: lament or opportunity?

**Russ Eanes** of Harrisonburg, Va., is executive director of MennoMedia.

According to megachurch pastor Rick Warren, who was interviewed in the Dec. 10, 2012, issue of *Newsweek*, America is "in the doldrums."

Warren is on the road pitching the 10th-anniversary edition of his bestselling book *The Purpose Driven Life*. His book sold more than 32 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 50 languages. He hopes his new and expanded edition will figure into a spiritual revival that he says our nation desperately needs.

I wish Warren well, even as I harbor some doubts about his methods and outcomes. I have respect and admiration for the fact that his ministry has always emphasized reaching out to the unchurched.

According to *Newsweek*, though, not everyone feels that Warren's message will resonate as well the second time around. Many fault his message as being too simplistic and shallow. "A new generation is looking for a bit more seriousness and depth," says Michael Horton, host of the White Horse Inn radio ministry.

I believe Warren is correct when he identifies that we are in a malaise. While I think the treatment he is prescribing won't fully satisfy this time around, I, too, think our culture is hungering for much, much more.

**Warren and others lament** the drift in America toward being "more European," meaning less churched and more secular. Maybe that's not such a bad thing. The "post-Christendom" phase that Europeans entered decades ago can be an opening for all Anabaptists (and Mennonites in particular)—an opportunity to return to our roots of not wanting our faith to be compromised by political power and wealth. The Anabaptists questioned and rejected many aspects of Christendom (a unity of faith, culture and government) five centuries ago and may be seen as the forerunners of post-Christendom—a "decoupling" of Christianity, culture and power.

In my work, reading and travels I am constantly bumping up against and relating to "Neo Anabaptists," i.e., those who have more recently identified with Anabaptist faith but have not been born into it. (I am one of these: I jokingly refer to myself as someone afflicted with what I call Adult Onset Anabaptism, or AOA.) Many Neo Anabaptists look to us in Mennonite Church USA for help and leadership.

Stuart Murray of the United Kingdom, author of the best-selling book *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith*, says: "We hope and expect that the experience of those who rejected the Christendom system long before it disintegrated might inspire and guide us as we live among its ruins and move out into post-Christendom."

While acknowledging that post-Christendom will require gifts from a diversity of faith traditions, Murray and others look to the Anabaptist faith distinctives of peace, community and a costly, Jesus-centered discipleship. To the extent that Anabaptists have been dissidents—marginalized and willing to suffer—they stand as inspiration in a post-Christendom environment in which the missional church relocates from the power centers to the margins of society.

For many of us, "church" is just a place we go once per week for a worship service.

I wonder if we are up to Murray's challenge. Too many of us suffer from the same malaise: We are drowning in materialism and juggling the all-consuming time demands of careers, families and church life. For many of us, "church" is just a place we go once per week for a worship service.

**Are we nurturing communities of faith** that radiate a spiritual "seriousness and depth" that people in our culture crave? Or is church just another annoying commitment that places unwanted demands on us?

In Luke 14, Jesus tells the parable of a banquet to which many were invited but most wouldn't come. Their excuses resonate today: "I'm busy with my business, my family, my social life—maybe next time."

Jesus is among us today; we may not recognize him, but we are invited to his banquet. What will our response be? The culture is hungering for spiritual depth, for community, for peace—all integral to our faith tradition. As its heirs, will we rise to the occasion and recognize our moment when it is upon us, or will we miss it? If we miss it, what will our excuse be? TM

# Membership guidelines allow conversation

Our Membership Guidelines for the Formation of Mennonite Church USA say it is a teaching position of our church that homosexual sexual activity is sin.

The framers of the guidelines were wise in using the term "teaching position." It is a valuable tool that gives weight (but not too much) to our church statements. It helps us both honor the collective counsel of the gathered denomination and open ourselves to the Spirit speaking to us through the voice of the minority.

In preparing for Pittsburgh 2011, our leaders hinted that they might limit the visibility of Pink Mennos. The Mennonite blogosphere lit up. *TMail*'s blogger cried injustice; he even quoted Martin Luther King Jr. against our leaders. I posted on his blog that I agreed with him that limiting the Pink Mennos can be injustice, those in power helping silence a minority.

I also challenged him not to reduce our leaders to one dimension (for or against justice) but recognize their felt responsibility to let our church's discernment shape our assembly. We would not cry "injustice" if our leaders restricted the voice and visibility of people advocating war; such restriction would flow from who we are. We also have churchwide documents (from 1986/87, 1995, 2001) against same-sex eroticism. How do our leaders give the dissenting minority a voice yet let those statements (while they stand) continue to impact the message that people hear from our denomination?

**A healthy balance:** The term "teaching position" helps us find that balance. First, labeling something a teaching position reminds us that the church has spoken in this area. In humility we acknowledge the statements of the denomination, especially when they come at the end of several years of conversation at the congregational and conference level. We know wisdom was not born with us.

Nonetheless, those statements may be wrong—and many are sure the sexuality one is. Andre Gingerich Stoner described the dilemma as he opened a Conversation Room session at our Pittsburgh assembly: "How does the church take positions on issues and also remain open to the possibility of new insight and leading of the Spirit?"

Here the term "teaching position" shows itself as valuable in a second way: It not only helps us honor the collective discernment of the gathered denomination but maintains room for the possibly prophetic minority voice. When the guidelines call a particular stance a teaching position, they do not demand that we assent to it. They even make space for us to vigorously dispute it in nonteaching settings. In fact, they go on to invite this by declaring that the call to "be in dialogue with those who hold differing views" is also a teaching position of our church. The guidelines only expect us who are members to recognize that our church's teaching on sexuality is our "best human understanding of God's way."

I heard of a man, not a pacifist, who nonetheless joined a Mennonite congregation, knowing that his kids would be taught peace. He even served as adult Sunday school teacher but chose not to teach against our denomination's position. Similarly, the guidelines do not say that one has to hold to the church's teaching on sexuality to be a member. They only ask us to acknowledge it, and they call our credentialed pastors not to act against it.

**Let's talk:** Dialogue on our church's position on sexuality is indeed needed, to the dismay of those of us who are sure the sexuality issue was settled by the Bible long ago and by the church in 1986/87, 1995 and 2001. Goodhearted brothers and sisters have sincere questions about the church's position on same-sex partnerships, and we must talk.

I welcome *The Mennonite*'s move toward ending its moratorium on this subject. During the years that our society has been dramatically shifting on homosexuality, we have been largely silent—no articles in our church periodical, no churchwide consultations or conversations. Do we really want our young adults making up their mind while only hearing the world? The only thing our denomination has said during the last 12 years is that in the past we said such and such. That has little appeal to young adults; if anything it moves them to run the other way.

So let's talk. Without mutual accountability through dialogue there is no chance of unity on this issue. Without us as a church searching together for what the Spirit of God is saying as we study Scripture and observe life, we will end up being formed not by God but by the world. TM

**Harold N. Miller** is pastor of Trissels Mennonite Church in Broadway, Va.

Without mutual accountability through dialogue there is no chance of unity on this issue.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Executive Board prepares for Phoenix 2013

## Close vote on whether to send membership guidelines revisions to delegates

The 2001 guidelines for membership in Mennonite Church USA congregations bedeviled Executive Board (EB) members when they attempted to update those guidelines more than a decade later. The Executive Board met in Phoenix Jan. 9-11.

"There are some strong feelings," said EB member Charlotte Hardt, "—maybe more [among people] on the West Coast—who feel like they've been betrayed. They thought they were assured the guidelines would be changed in six years [after the 2001 adoption]."

The 2001 guidelines allow congregations to set standards for individual membership, authorize area conferences to set membership criteria for congregations in the conference and authorize the delegate assembly to set membership standards for area conferences wishing to be members of Mennonite Church USA.

"I was the chair of the committee that wrote [the guidelines]," said Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman, "and some committee members explained them differently to their friends."

According to Stutzman, there were different understandings about the duration of the guidelines.

> I don't want to have a fight about sexuality at Phoenix. ... What does this minor administrative update do except run the risk of having a big fight two years early?—Samuel Voth Schrag

"There were some who agreed to the guidelines believing they would go away," Stutzman said. "[They now] feel betrayed if we don't get rid of them. Others will feel betrayed if we do get rid of them."

Whether or not to revise the guidelines was the presenting issue for the board on Jan. 10. Stutzman proposed an "administrative update" that would be taken to the delegate assembly at the Phoenix 2013 convention.

The update primarily removes language related to the 2001 merger that created Mennonite Church USA. But it did not materially change the polity in the guidelines. Stutzman also proposed that in addition to the updates, the EB should authorize a new process for an initiative that might use "covenant" instead of membership language in the future.

EB member Samuel Voth Schrag objected to Stutzman's proposal to send the administrative changes to delegates at Phoenix 2013.

"I'm uncomfortable passing this," Schrag said. "I don't want to have a fight about sexuality at Phoenix. ... What does this minor administrative update do except run the risk of having a big fight two years early?"

However, the Executive Board vote to send along the "administrative changes" narrowly passed, with two members voting against it, eight members voting for it and four members abstaining.

**The EB was meeting in Phoenix** in part to prepare for the July convention. This preparation included discussion about how to address U.S. immigration policies in the delegate assembly agenda. Stutzman led a group exercise to identify Bible texts that might be used in the delegate assembly discussions. Most of the group also traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border on Jan. 11 to experience one of the activities available to convention participants (see page 7).

In other business, the EB reviewed a new Everence policy that would allow some investors to opt out of socially responsible investing plans for their retirement accounts.

Moderator Dick Thomas also proposed a change in the EB's meeting patterns to save staff time and money. His proposal would also eliminate the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) meeting in a convention year.

"A great deal of time, energy and resources go into preparing for [EB and CLC] meetings" Thomas said. "Staff spend a minimum of 80 hours preparing for and attending these meetings. Over the course of any year we have three Executive Board meetings and two CLC meetings. It would not be unreasonable to say that each [participating EB staff member] spends 400 hours (almost 20 percent of their time) in preparation for EB and CLC meetings. Over $48,000 of the EB staff funds are budgeted for these meetings. This does not include staff travel, the cost to the conferences or the cost of agency staff to attend."

**Thomas estimated that changing** the number of in-person meetings would save the organization a minimum of $25,000 annually. The suggested changes will be recommended to the Constituency Leaders Council, which meets in March. If the CLC agrees, the EB can take final action at its April 4-6 meeting in Kansas City, Mo.

The board's consent agenda included the reappointment of Ed Diller and reaffirmation of Leonard Dow as Mennonite Church USA representatives to the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. board of directors.—*Everett J. Thomas*

# Convention leaders suggest homework

## De León-Hartshorn: If not attending convention, spend the week volunteering.

Participants in Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention in Phoenix this July will have various opportunities to engage in issues related to U.S. immigration. This is, in part, due to the convention location and the controversial nature of Arizona's anti-immigration law, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (SB1070).

Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, recommends that those who attend convention prepare themselves by learning about immigration in their own communities.

"It's important to understand the issues of immigration before coming to Phoenix because while we're there, we'll have more intense learning experiences on the subject," she says. "If you come somewhat prepared, you'll get a lot more out of convention."

"Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Central Committee U.S., MCC West Coast and the MCC Washington Office all have wonderful immigration resources on their websites, from videos to books to discussions," she says. "The MCC Washington Office offers basic information as well as more advanced materials on engaging in policymaking and advocacy work. Mennonite Church USA offers resources designed for congregations, Sunday school classes and small groups."

In addition, de León-Hartshorn suggests that individuals and congregations contact local groups that are involved in immigration issues and find ways to join their efforts.

Some individuals and congregations have decided not to participate in the Phoenix convention as a sign of solidarity with people who are undocumented. De León-Hartshorn believes it is important to back up such a decision with action.

"I'd like to challenge these congregations and individuals to take the convention week off and volunteer that time with different local organizations that work with immigrants," she says. ... Become aware of the policies that are being enforced in your area."

De León-Hartshorn's biggest hope is that those who come to convention will prepare themselves well and arrive "with an open heart" to hear the stories of immigrants and accept them as a part of the church, whether or not they are legally in the United States.

**Learning opportunities** at Phoenix 2013 will include

1. introductory seminars focused on immigration, and two-hour blocks for more in-depth learning;
2. an interactive Bible study led by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers on what it means to think of God as undocumented;
3. Bienvenido program trainings led by Gilberto Pérez Jr. (Bienvenido is a prevention/intervention program that increases access to mental health services and improves the mental health and quality of life of immigrants.);
4. an Immigration and Customs Enforcement tour of Florence Detention Center, followed by a visit to the Florence Project office (The detention center is where the majority of undocumented immigrants are sent, and the Florence Project coordinates free legal services for people detained in Arizona for immigration removal proceedings.);
5. all-day learning trips to the U.S.-Mexico border with BorderLinks (more information on page 18);
6. a traveling choir that will sing songs of healing and hope in several locations throughout Phoenix;
7. a prayer walk that will bring participants to places of significance around Phoenix.

In addition, a special offering will be taken at convention for the DREAMer Fund, which provides help with application fees for undocumented young adults as they apply for U.S. DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act deferment. The goal is to raise $15,000 to help 50 young Mennonites.—*Hilary J. Scarsella*

Everett J. Thomas

**Prayer walk**: Members of the Mennonite Church Executive Board participated in a Jan. 9 prayer walk past the Maricopa County (Ariz.) Supreme Court building (background), the Madison Street Jail and Sheriff Joe Arpaio's offices in anticipation of similar prayer walks by participants at the Phoenix 2013 convention.

# California peaches in Georgia

## 'Food justice' is part of the curriculum at DOOR Atlanta.

Heidi Aspinwall

Chefs from LeCordon Bleu Culinary Institute donate their time to prepare food for DOOR Atlanta's Sow and Grow event.

The peaches were from California. Standing in the produce section of an Atlanta grocery store, David York couldn't help but notice that while he lived in a state best-known for its peaches, the bins of fuzzy fruits had come from a state 3,000 miles away. It was a particular concern for York because of his job. As the co-interim director of DOOR Atlanta, he had interest in serving its participants local food. DOOR hosts youth groups who come to the city to do weeks of summer service, and during the summer of 2012 the focus was on food justice.

That focus started small, with a few questions at a spring staff meeting about the produce they planned to serve over the summer. Tim Showalter Ehst, York's co-director, had an interest in farming and food justice as well as connections at Berea Mennonite Church's local farm, where DOOR volunteers sometimes work. He broached the idea of using local produce and helping participants bake their own bread.

"Tim was the driver and he educated all of us," York says. "I was the cheerleader."

So they started with bread, locally grown produce and organic cheese. From there, they investigated options for local chicken. They provided the groups with local, organic soda and popped local popcorn instead of snacking on potato chips. Brownies were made with fair trade chocolate.

"We made the whole concept of food justice part of the curriculum and talked with the kids about it," York says. "We really let the food make a social and theological statement about who we are."

That social and theological statement spilled over into the community. Back at the grocery store, York alerted the manager to his interest in Georgia peaches. Once the store staff heard about what DOOR was trying to do, they made an effort to supply them with local produce.

"We taught the groups that if they ask at their stores, and if enough people do that, the stores will change what they stock," York says. "Soon the grocery store knew our cycle, and they'd have the boxes ready to go when I showed up."

It wasn't just the grocery store that got involved, however. York says that DOOR participants took the message to heart as well.

"A lot of people really got into it and carried the concept back home," he says. "We've heard from participants who plan to plant a garden or have changed the food menu at a youth group event."

Tonya Greene took over the directorship from Showalter Ehst and York in August 2012 as the last of the groups were participating. She plans to continue emphasizing food justice in all DOOR programming.

"I have access to our local farmers' market, so I can go there," she says, "and I'm learning of other farms here in Atlanta, so I'm reaching out to them to see if we can send volunteers."

Greene says one of DOOR's yearlong participants is using food justice in his work with homelessness.

"Justin Chambers is in charge of picking up the food for Mercy Church, which has one of the food pantries we work

# John Powell retires after 23 years of service

## Powell, who worked to dismantle racism, has retired from Mission Network.

Craig Welscott

Guide My Feet
While I Run
This Race .....

John Powell retired from Mission Network Dec. 31, 2012, after 23 years of service.

John Powell, who has worked tirelessly toward creating an antiracist culture in the Mennonite church, retired Dec. 31, 2012, from Mennonite Mission Network after 23 years covering two different time periods.

Included in Powell's large range of gifts is his beautiful tenor voice.

Powell led those who attended his retirement celebration on Dec. 12, 2012, in singing "Guide My Feet," a song that symbolizes his faith journey.

Powell worked for Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, from 1969 through 1974.

He left the Mennonite church, angered and disillusioned by the racism he encountered. However, he later returned, serving with Mennonite Mission Network from 1994 through 2012.

"I am deeply humbled," Powell said. "This leave-taking feels different from my leaving in 1974. It feels good. It is painful in a different way. This time I'm leaving for my own good. I have enjoyed working at Mennonite Mission Network, but finally, at 71, I can say, Enough."

"We appreciate the leadership you gave in cultivating a vision for justice and reconciliation," said Stanley W. Green, Mission Network Executive Director, in a statement read at Powell's retirement recognition. "We are especially grateful for the special care you gave to shepherd the agency in pursuit of its vision of becoming a nonracist institution. Your grace, patience and courage challenged and inspired us to go further than we might otherwise have, and we particularly celebrate the momentum you helped stimulate for us on this journey toward a more faithful future."—*Mennonite Mission Network staff*

## California peaches (continued from page 34)

with," she says. "One organization, called More For Atlanta, has been giving him freshly grown produce. He always tells them how much he appreciates that."

Additionally, the board of directors of DOOR Atlanta recently adopted food as one of their main priorities in the coming year. This idea carried over into their most recent fund-raising event, which they called Sow and Grow.

The event brought together past and present participants, artists, board members and DOOR national staff. Organizers served a menu that included fresh salad, butternut squash soup and an apple dessert, and students from Atlanta's LeCordon Bleu Culinary College, where Greene taught classes, volunteered to make the meal.

Heidi Aspinwall, DOOR's associate executive director, is excited by the new priority for DOOR Atlanta and by what happened at the Sow and Grow event.

"Atlanta is known as the most forested major U.S. city and it has the climate for a seriously long growing season," she says. "But, ironically, Atlanta's poorer neighborhoods are 'food deserts.' Fresh, healthy food is hard to come by."

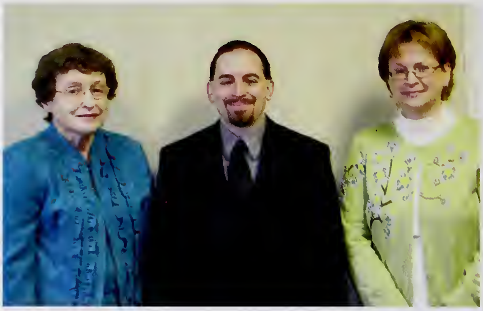
Aspinwall hopes DOOR's emphasis on food justice plays a role in "reforesting" these food deserts in Atlanta.

"Through the education of programs like ours, the volunteer work in urban gardens and the long-term work of advocacy, access and awareness, we can shorten the distance between fresh produce and our city's people," she says.—*Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Roanoke Church rebounds after members leave

## The 70 members who remained wanted to be part of Mennonite Church USA.

Photo provided



Roanoke's pastoral leadership team includes, from left, Alice Kennell, Bryan Miller and Mary Kennell.

In May 2010, Roanoke Mennonite Church in Eureka, Ill., held a vote to decide whether or not to remain as a member of Mennonite Church USA. The vote occurred after a recommendation by the church elders to withdraw from Mennonite Church USA.

The vote required a two-thirds majority; it failed by a small amount, about 3 percent. At that point, about 100 church members left to start another congregation, and 70 remained at Roanoke Mennonite Church.

Roanoke's divide caused intense pain to the members. However, attempting to find healing, the remaining Roanoke members established a new vision and formed a new pastoral team.

> For 30 to 40 years prior [to the vote], we worshipped together as two congregations. We managed to coexist.—Alice Kennell

"We were rejoicing in a new sense of freedom in Christ in the midst of deep grief over the loss of friends and family due to the split," says Mary Kennell, a member of the new pastoral team. "Our church's journey has been a lesson in how God, through the Holy Spirit, can work in the midst of brokenness and bring healing and new opportunities."

Before the fateful vote, Chuck Neufeld, Illinois Mennonite Conference minister, says he sensed deep tensions in the congregation.

One group felt strongly about remaining in Illinois Mennonite Conference and in Mennonite Church USA, and the others were wary of the denomination and carried more fundamentalist theological understandings. Whether women could be in leadership positions emerged as a divisive issue.

"For 30 to 40 years prior [to the vote], we worshipped together as two congregations," says Alice Kennell, another member of the pastoral team. "We managed to coexist."

When the previous pastor left Roanoke in June 2005, the congregation struggled for five years to find a pastor before the 2010 vote. Many turned down the offer as they sensed the underlying divides in the church.

"Some male candidates caught wind of the resistance to women in leadership and withdrew their names," says Neufeld.

Mary says the church was asking for two different people. "We couldn't find someone that satisfied everyone," she says.

**The leadership at that time maintained church life** but did not move it forward, creating anxiety among the members, Mary says. Many members simply accommodated one another to "keep the peace."

"You learned to talk of pleasant, safe topics and steer away from anything controversial," says Mary. "When you can't really talk about what is important to you, can there be real unity?"

This conflict culminated after the vote, when two-thirds of the church left.

"Strong emotions indicated how seriously we all took 'being church' together," says Mary. "Separating brought intense reactions and opinions on both sides."

Late in July 2010, Gary Martin began as transitional pastor for the 70 members who stayed. During this time, members faced conflicting realities, says Mary.

"The congregation's sense of identity had taken a hard hit too," she says.

Martin worked with a newly formed transitional leadership team comprised of eight people, both men and women.

Additionally, a committee was formed to look at structure and compared the previous "hierarchical" structure with a proposed "flat structure," factoring in the new size of the church. The new proposal was approved.

"Gary facilitated us in forming a vision of doing 'kingdom business,' rather than 'church business,'" says Mary. "He helped us see that structure is important and can be a vehicle for churches to better utilize individuals' gifts and passions."

Next, a pastoral search committee looked for pastors from within and outside the church to make up a pastoral team of three. On Aug. 21, 2011, the church affirmed Alice and Mary as members of the team. Alice and Mary are both in Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Journey program for leaders.

"Being called and accepting the call to pastoral ministry was a huge leap for me" says Mary. "Trusting God as we take on new roles is freeing and disconcerting at the same time."

In 2012, Bryan Miller joined the pastoral team from the Pastoral Ministries Program at Hesston (Kan.) College. Prior to that he lived in Apple Creek, Ohio. The three pastors are viewed as equal in that they are all called to pastoral ministry, although there are differences in time commitments and salaries. Alice says there is strength in the different ages, life experiences and perspectives.

"We all bring a different history," she says.

The team model isn't the only new element for Roanoke. Other members now serve in ways they never have before. Alice says Roanoke empowers people to use their abilities that they initially thought were not needed.

"Now we all do everything we can," Alice says.

"One dear member who is 97 laments that she can no longer help in the ways she wants," says Mary. "But she commits to prayer and regular attendance. She also made us delicious peach coffee cakes for pastor appreciation."

Despite the newness, pain still exists. Miller parallels the church divide to a divorce. Roanoke members still experience feelings of hurt and rejection but are on a path of healing.

"Over time we realized there isn't something wrong with us," he says. "God loves us for who we are."

Their new mission statement points to where the church is on its journey: Seeking and extending God's healing, hope and reconciliation.

Members of Roanoke see former members at weddings, funerals and more—although most are not talking about the conflict. Relationships on an individual basis still exist. Alice says she has one friend who left who she meets with weekly.

**They are still friends despite the challenges.** One way the two groups maintain contact is through prayer for one another, particularly regarding health issues, Alice says.

Mary also maintains a friendship with a member who left. "I've always been able to be honest with her, even when we disagree."

> Over time we realized there isn't something wrong with us. God loves us for who we are.
> —Bryan Miller

At this point, current members of Roanoke have forgiven, welcome fellowship with and wish to bless those who previously left, with the hope that those who left can do the same for current members of Roanoke, says Miller.

"The challenge for me is to be real and honest about who I am in Christ, while exhibiting a nonjudgmental curiosity about who they are in Christ," Mary says.

Neufeld says his obligation is to care for the congregations that are part of IMC. "I can say that my heart longs to reestablish some contact with the congregation that left and find ways of us blessing each other—even some measure of fellowship," he says.—*Anna Groff*

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# Living as missionaries in Los Angeles

## Hurs launch peace center; one goal is to address North-South Korea conflict.

Sean Park

The Hur family

Hyun and Sue Hur feel "a strong call to live as missionaries," but not in the stereotypical context that probably comes to mind. Hyun, raised in Korea, and Sue, his Korean-American wife, see one of the richest possible settings for missional work and peacemaking right in their own backyard: Los Angeles.

Four years after planting one of only two Korean-language Mennonite congregations in the United States (Church For Others, the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference-member congregation in Temple City), they are branching out—not only to launch a sister congregation but also to pursue the exciting vision of a Peace Center that would share the unique "gift" of Anabaptist teachings on peace and reconciliation with a broader immigrant church community.

**The Hurs planned** an official launching service for the Peace Center, dubbed ReconciliAsian, on Jan. 21 in Los Angeles. Among other things, the center will offer workshops on conflict resolution for congregations and continue something called the North Korea Table Talk, a gathering of individuals to consider ways to help transform the decades-long conflict between North and South Korea. The Hurs also envision facilitating connections between peacemaking efforts in Korea and America and among Asians (Chinese, Koreans, Japanese and Filipinos) whose historical animosities and misunderstandings sometimes carry over into the American context.

The concept for ReconciliAsian grew naturally out of Hyun's longtime passion for Christian reconciliation and conflict transformation, issues that stirred his heart years ago when he was a seminary student at a Baptist institution in Korea, discovered Anabaptist theology and enthusiastically joined the Mennonite fold.

Strife is common in highly hierarchical Korean churches, Sue observes, but also in congregations of all kinds that are composed mainly of immigrants. For newcomers struggling with cultural adaptation, economic difficulty and a loss of status and sense of control over their lives, stress often bubbles over into conflict in the one setting where they "can find their identity and practice their power," says Hyun: the church.

**For the Hurs, peacemaking goes** hand in hand with church planting. A struggle they experienced in founding Church For Others, a house fellowship that will continue under the leadership of Pablo Kim, is a sense of being small and alone in a Korean-American community highly suspicious of small denominations like the Mennonites—to the point where one Church For Others member was officially shunned as a heretic by the church he had formerly served as young adult leader.

"I know a lot of Korean pastors, and when they found out I was Anabaptist, it was really hard to have conversations with them," Hyun says. Observing that most Korean Christians know nothing about the theology or practice of conflict transformation, he considered how he could be a part of offering that knowledge to other denominations.

Launching a second Los Angeles-area Korean-language congregation, as the Hurs plan to do alongside the peace center work, will improve opportunities for fellowship and connection and ease the sense that Church For Others is alone in its ministry and theology.

Though they're only getting around to an official "launch" now, the peace center has been active since last April. It hosted the first North Korean Table Talk last July, which included a presentation by Don Mosley about the Fuller Center for Housing project to help bring much-needed housing to North Korea, among other events.

**The Schowalter Foundation** provided a $15,000 grant in November 2012 to continue the work the Hurs are already doing. A local ministry support team led by Anne Dueck of Pasadena (Calif.) Mennonite Church has also formed to support the Hurs' work. The team invites churches to get involved through prayer, reading email updates and making a financial gift or pledge to help raise $66,000 to help cover the Hurs' expenses.—*Doreen Martens, reprinted with permission from the January 2012 issue of* Panorama, *the PSMC newsletter*

# Lázaro works to bridge Bethel cultures

## Multicultural Student Union adviser uses music and dance to make connections.

Vada Snider

Bethel College Multicultural Student Union adviser Caleb Lázaro, left, backs up Gus Palacios, freshman from Austin, Texas, during a miniconcert by MSU members at Bethel's Fall Festival last October.

As he's begun working to bridge cultures at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., Caleb Lázaro has found one of the most effective tools to be salsa dancing.

Lázaro just finished his first semester as Multicultural Student Union adviser at Bethel—not a new position but a greatly expanded one.

"I came into a program that had been largely focused on fellowship," Lázaro says. "We're now trying to get at it from more angles—trying to find diverse ways of engaging marginalized populations on campus."

By "marginalized populations," he says, he means "students from other cultures, particularly inner-city or large-city, unfamiliar with the dominant culture—which is white and rural/small town. They are often underrepresented here because of how they communicate, the music they listen to, a different worldview.

"The Multicultural Student Union is a safe place to voice some of that."

**Though the formal MSU group** that meets monthly is not large—nine or 10 at most—one of its goals is "to engage all cultures on campus," Lázaro says. To that end, they planned several events during the fall, including the salsa dancing, when Lázaro's sisters, Daniela and Myriam, came from Colorado Springs one weekend in September to lead dance instruction. About 60 students showed up for salsa, cumbia, merengue, bachata (a traditional dance from the Dominican Republic) and open dancing with recorded music.

The public event for October was a miniconcert at Bethel's Fall Festival, with a half-dozen students performing in their preferred styles, ranging from gospel to hip-hop to slam poetry.

He set up a recording studio in a spare room in his campus apartment—all that was required was a condenser microphone, computer and audio interface.

"Most of my day-to-day work as multicultural adviser involves being intentional about building relationships—with students of color in particular and all students in general," Lázaro says. "[My wife] Mai and I are having people over to the apartment all the time to record or to have supper."

**Lázaro also eats one meal a day** in the cafeteria during the week in order to get to know more students and find out what's important to them.

He has learned that "even within minority cultural groups on campus, there's a great diversity—in what it means to be black, Asian, Hispanic. You can't lump all these groups together. There are subgroups within minority cultures.

"It's been a challenge to reach out to them creatively, to bring them all to the table, to be a part of the fellowship experience. But there's a growing sense of solidarity [among] the students who've been involved in MSU programming and leadership."

Late in the fall semester, through email balloting, the MSU selected its first leaders, co-presidents Ajai Brown, sophomore from Oklahoma City, and Lupita Gonzalez, junior from Newton, Kan.

"Caleb knows and gets along with students well," says Gonzalez. "He knows what we want, partly because he's a student, too." Lázaro, who has an associate degree, is studying for his bachelor's degree at Bethel.

**Now, with his first semester** of experience behind him, both Lázaro and his boss, Vice President of Student Life Aaron Austin, are looking ahead to an even broader role for the multicultural adviser.

Lázaro notes that "another challenge [has been] realizing how much Bethel focuses on race issues as being our biggest social justice concern on campus, when really there's so much more. As someone who's committed to discussing race issues openly, I'm also aware that there are gender issues, sexual identity issues, homophobia issues that need to be discussed."

After informally "advocating for those voices to be heard," Lázaro will be exploring how to do that more deliberately in the future.—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

# Zehr completes 25 years as chair of editorial council

## Believers Church Bible Commentary was 'a good journey, a labor of love.'

Paul M. Zehr, a retired bishop and seminary instructor, is retiring after serving as chair of the editorial council of the Believers Church Bible Commentary (BCBC) series for over 25 years.

"While it's been a labor of love," Zehr says, "It is time for someone else to take over."

Zehr will work with a co-chair Gordon Matties, professor of biblical studies at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba, until the November meeting of the council, at which point Matties will become chair. Matties has also served on the council since 1987 and represents the Mennonite Brethren on the council.

The goal of the Herald Press commentary series is to facilitate Bible study for all and to aid in understanding the original message of Scripture and its meaning for today. The BCBC series is a cooperative effort of six denominations: Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, Brethren in Christ, Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Brethren and Brethren Church.

The commentaries include "good scholarship using up-to-date biblical studies," says Zehr. The writing and language is upper high school and beginning university level, and the commentaries are used in college and seminary classes.

**By February 2013, when the John commentary** will be published, there will be 26 volumes in print, with 11 more volumes covering Old Testament books in process, and six more in writing or development stages from the New Testament. Some volumes cover several books of the Bible; there will be 44 volumes in all when the series is complete, now projected for 2020.

Zehr was appointed to the council by the Mennonite Church in 1987 and has been involved with 24 of the 26 volumes published so far. Zehr's own volume, *1&2 Timothy and Titus*, was published in 2010.

Amy Gingerich, director of media for MennoMedia and Herald Press, says, "Paul is an astute leader with a true gift for leading meetings." She says Zehr never loses sight of the commentary's intended audience, pastors and church leaders, and what is readable for that audience. "At the same time, Paul is deeply committed to the highest level of academic scholarship," adds Gingerich.

The idea for the series emerged in the mid-1970s, when Ben Cutrell, then publisher of Mennonite Publishing House, tested the idea with the various denominations involved and with seminary and Bible college faculties. Cutrell set up the structure and by 1981 had begun to appoint editors; by 1986, the first volume was published.

The Old Testament editor is Doug Miller, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kan., and the New Testament editor is Loren Johns, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

**Zehr says his time on the council** has been marked by good working relationships among all on the editorial council, with one person appointed by each of the six denominations. Members don't always agree on theological or biblical interpretation, but the group has worked by consensus.

Levi Miller, an editor at Mennonite Publishing House for many years, says of Zehr's leadership, "Paul Zehr brought together a Lancaster bishop and a Princeton scholar, a happy combination for the Believers Church Bible Commentary leadership."

Some volumes are produced in about five years, from assignment to published book, especially when a writer is able to utilize a sabbatical from other work for dedicated study and writing. Other volumes take 15-20 years to write, edit and publish.

"I've enjoyed the good relationships with the editors and writers," says Zehr. "It has been very meaningful personally and professionally to work with the content of the Bible in this way. It's been a good journey."

**Zehr sees the commentaries helping** aid the church over the next 50 years, since commentaries have a much longer shelf life than other books.

Zehr says that as Bible scholars outside the Anabaptist tradition review the commentaries, they sometimes comment on the "Anabaptist hermeneutic" that comes through in the books. "This means that the larger scholarly world is becoming aware of a Believers Church perspective on the Bible," says Zehr. Most reviews have been very positive, only disagreeing with minor points.—*MennoMedia staff*

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# Who speaks for Mennonite Church Canada?

## Mennonite Church Canada works to find a voice in the midst of MCC.

Dan Dyck

Paul Heidebrecht (left), of MCC's Ottawa office, moderates a panel discussion about who speaks for Mennonite Church Canada. From left are Jennifer Wiebe, MCC Ottawa, Clare Ewert Fisher, MCC Saskatchewan, and Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada.

MCC, MDS, MFC—the list of acronyms for Mennonite-related organizations goes on. But who speaks specifically for Mennonite Church Canada membership in an identity confused community?

This was the thrust of a panel discussion at Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) Annual General Meeting on Sept. 21, 2012, at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba. What began as a broad conversation about advocacy and MCC's role as an organization that represents seven church conferences took a twist when Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada, brought another challenge to the table: With MCC's broad involvement on many social justice issues, Mennonite Church Canada struggles to find appropriate ways to express its voice—a primary task for its membership.

Metzger has been part of two ministry reduction exercises at Mennonite Church Canada since 2002. As MC Canada leaders worked to define what the national church should stop doing and what it should continue doing, Metzger said at the meeting, "It felt to me that we always would bump up against MCC … we would say, 'MCC does that' and so MC Canada doesn't need to be engaged in that. We didn't want to duplicate the work that MCC was doing, and we didn't want to be in a position of competing against MCC."

**Metzger has been in persistent dialogue** with congregational and area church leaders to define key responsibilities for the national church. "We've realized that one of those responsibilities is to have that collective voice of [our] whole [membership] because no other part of our entity possesses that unique responsibility."

Metzger asserted that the responsibility of a collective voice matters a great deal "when speaking to the rest of our [Mennonite Church Canada] family of faith, other parts of the wider family of Christian faith and representing our [collective] voice to our government. When I think about that, I find myself again bumping into MCC," adding, "It does feel important to me that [the national church] shouldn't give up that responsibility."

**Panel member Jennifer Wiebe** of MCC's Ottawa office spelled out the numerous complexities of speaking for many voices, since MCC is made up of partners abroad and domestically. MCC has seven supporting partner church conferences. "We're not only speaking exclusively for the church. We're hopefully framing our advocacy work as being rooted in our Anabaptist values," said Wiebe.

Metzger has been broadly seeking input on what primary areas the national church needs to focus its voice. What he has learned is that "for MC Canada to have integrity, I can't imagine not speaking to three issues," he said: "climate change, indigenous relations and interfaith relationships."

When Metzger attended the United Nations climate change action event in South Africa in late 2011, he informally polled Mennonite Church Canada members asking what he should tell Canada's Environment Minister, Peter Kent. The feedback, which came primarily from young adults, helped shape the subsequent meeting with Kent.

But one email comment stuck out for Metzger: "It makes me proud of my church to know that my church and our church leader is there."—*Dan Dyck of Mennonite Church Canada*

# Young West African churches commission missionaries

## Eastern Mennonite Missions attend service in November 2012.

Beryl Forrester

Gibby Mane (back right) with members of his family.

The Catel Mennonite Church in Guinea-Bissau joyfully commissioned five men as missionaries to five villages in its region on Nov. 18, 2012. The commissioning marks a significant milestone in the development of the seven-year-old church.

Momadu Mane, Dauda M'boina, Gibby Mane, Celino Feirari and Siga Mane have all been active in village evangelism for some time but have now been sent to specific villages by the Catel congregation to evangelize and plant churches.

Beryl Forrester and Andrew Stutzman are Eastern Mennonite Missions' regional representatives for West Africa. At the commissioning service, Stutzman preached about Jesus sending out the 12 in Matthew 9-10.

The Catel congregation is asking its five new missionaries to be good examples of those transformed by the spirit of Christ and to help people understand Jesus as one who loves them, heals them, forgives them and offers a new way to live in relation to God and their neighbors.

Further, the sending congregation charged the missionaries with establishing visible fellowships of believers who gather together for worship and are ready to follow Jesus in all aspects of life.—*Nita Landis of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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# Learning new skills for a better future

## Mennonite Central Committee supports a sewing class in South Sudan.

Nina Linton

Toddlers Ester Keji, left, and Emmanuel Kenyi watch while their mothers Jerisa Muro and Hellen Poni talk with tailoring instructor Mustafa Atrima.

Carrying her 2-year old daughter Ester on her back, Jerisa Muro walks to a sewing class almost two miles from her home in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan. Muro, a mother of four children, ages 2 to 11, hopes to start a tailoring business and earn enough money so that her children can go to school.

She is especially concerned that her two eldest children are not attending school.

"I didn't go to school because of the long war," she says. "My father died of a stroke when I was young. My mother had no means to send us to school. If I acquire good skills here, then I can send my children to school, and they will not be illiterate."

Mennonite Central Committee has been supporting this project since 2009, when it was started by Florence Ayikoru and the Episcopal Church of Sudan's Mother's Union.

Each year, 20 women learn sewing, life skills and small business management skills.

Graduates of the six-month program can buy their sewing machines at a reduced rate and take out small loans to help them start a tailoring business.

"I feel so good about what we are doing," says Ayikoru. "We are changing lives. We are making a difference. Every time I see graduates of our program, I ask them if they have customers, and they do."

It is these success stories that motivate Muro to learn skills that will help build a better future for herself and her children.

Her life is marked with hardships. Her eldest brother was killed during the civil war, 1983-2005.

"During the war we spent many years in the bush," she recalls. "We went to a refugee camp in Uganda, but I did not get any training there."

Six years ago, Muro left an abusive relationship. She maintained custody of their baby, who is now 7 years old, but lost custody of her two eldest children. These children are being raised by their grandmother, who cannot afford to send them to school.

Now remarried, Muro sees a brighter future for herself and her two youngest children. But she also wants to help her eldest children.

"If I could make two dresses a day, I would be much taller," she says as she looks forward to the day when all her children can to go school.—*Gladys Terichow of Mennonite Central Committee*

Ryan Rodrick Beiler

VIA DOLOROSA

# Prayer and action for Gaza

Under the watchful eye of Israeli soldiers, Palestinian Christians lead an April 2012 procession from the Old City of Jerusalem toward the Garden of Gethsemane in observance of Maundy Thursday, the night Jesus was arrested before his crucifixion.

In 2005, the Israeli human rights organizations B'tselem and HaMoked jointly published a report describing the Gaza Strip as "one big prison." Over seven years later, this report remains terribly relevant. Gaza is one of the most crowded places on earth with 1.7 million Palestinians crammed into a 140 square-mile area that has been under an Israeli siege since 2006. The majority of Gazans are refugees, living in refugee camps. With decades of limited economic access and opportunity due to Israeli closures—leading to a debilitating process that one scholar has labeled "de-development"—today some 80 percent of Gazans receive food assistance, 60 percent of households are food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity, and 40 percent live below the poverty line.

**Despite its "disengagement" in 2005,** Israel continues to maintain control over the Gaza Strip, leaving it still very much an occupying power, not least through a siege that many have condemned as a form of collective punishment. Palestinians do not have control over borders (land, sea or air) or movement in and out of Gaza and live constantly under the threat of Israeli military incursions, shelling and extrajudicial "targeted assassinations" that terrorize Gaza's civilian population. The vulnerability of this population was again evidenced during Israel's recent military operation "Pillar of Defense" that left over 170 Palestinians and six Israelis killed, as it was during Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" (2008-2009) in which 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed.

As with many situations around the world today, many observers of situations like the one in Gaza are left with a sense of helplessness, asking, What can we do?

**Mennonites in the United States** have been building relationships in Palestine for more than 60 years. Agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) have worked alongside Palestinians for more than 60 years and with Israelis for 40 years. An important expression of that work has been education and advocacy, communicating the stories of Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilders to U.S. audiences. And part of that task has been not only to offer a way to think about responses to questions like, What can we do? but to point out that our observations are not as distanced and disinterested as we sometimes believe them to be.

The recognition that we already have—and have had for decades—relationships with Palestinians and Israelis arguably changes the question to something less abstract and more particular: What kind of relationships do we have with Palestinians and Israelis, and what are our responsibilities in those relationships?

It is a fundamental recognition that we are not detached, that we cannot opt out and that we have to struggle in pursing not only fidelity in those relationships but fidelity in response to the gospel call to self-giving love.

This recognition of relationship and its challenges and struggles can be seen in the Kairos Palestine Document, "A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering" (www.kairospalestine.ps).

In December 2009, more than a dozen Palestinian church leaders co-authored this document as a "cry of hope in the absence of all hope," addressed to Palestinians, Israelis and "Christian brothers and sisters in the churches around the world."

**In addition to challenging theologies** that legitimize violence and dispossession, it points out the mission of the church "to speak the word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly" and to "stand alongside the oppressed."

Many would have us understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in abstract religious terms—such as Christian Zionism—or part of a broader "clash of civilizations" or "global war on terror." It could be argued, however, that Palestine is best understood as an encounter between a settler colonial movement—looking for liberation, for a land without a people for a people without a land, seeking to extend control over particular territory—and the indigenous population already inhabiting a land that turned out not to be empty after all.

This dispossession is often referred to as "Nakba," the Arabic word for "catastrophe." It is used by Palestinians to refer to what happened to them in 1948, when between 750,000 and 900,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes and more than 500 Palestinian villages were destroyed. "Naksa," another Arabic word, is used to refer to the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza during the 1967 war, with some 400,000 Palestinians becoming refugees. It also marks the beginning of Israel's illegal military occupation of these territories.

The Kairos Palestine Document calls the military occupation of Palestinian land a "sin against God and humanity." And counter to the optimism accompanying various "peace processes" over recent years, the Kairos Palestine Document describes the expansion of Israeli domination over Palestinian life and land. Palestinian livelihoods are devastated as more land is expropriated for the construction of the 470-mile/760-km separation barrier cutting through the West Bank, the dramatic growth of illegal settlements, including in and around Jerusalem, the proliferation of checkpoints and roadblocks that obstruct mobility, the demolition of homes and other forms of collective punishment, the one-big-prison-status of Gaza and the continuing state of dispossession of 7 million Palestinian refugees worldwide.

**As the Kairos Palestine Document urges** Christians to "take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land," it favorably notes that some Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations and churches, support boycotts and divestment as a form of nonviolent resistance to the occupation.

Boycotts and divestment continue to be discussed in many church circles as Christians reflect on the nature of our investments and whether they contribute to justice and peace. Indeed, it is due to the seemingly ineffective nature of international political or legal mechanisms to find a just peace in Palestine-Israel that a growing conversation about exploring alternative mechanisms, such as economic pressures, has developed. It was on the one-year anniversary of the International Court of Justice 2004 ruling condemning Israel's separation barrier as illegal that Palestinian civil society lifted up a nonviolent method to resist the Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestinian land by launching a boycott, divestment and sanctions, or BDS, campaign, arguing that Israel's occupation of Palestinian land continues in part because it is profitable for companies in Israel and around the world.

**Many have criticized the BDS approach** for reasons ranging from claims of its polarizing effect, that it marginalizes Israeli peace voices, to claims that it unfairly singles out the state of Israel. Some argue that it will be unduly harmful to Palestinians who are dependent on the Israeli economy. While others argue that it simply will not work to bring about a just and sustainable peace.

Palestinian civil society lifted up a nonviolent method to resist the Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestinian land by launching a boycott, divestment and sanctions, or BDS, campaign.

Those who would discourage such "negative" or "critical" measures as boycotts and divestment instead suggest more "positive" approaches such as "investing" in the future of a Palestinian state. But without freedom of movement or access to resources or services, such investments can hardly produce "positive" benefits—economic or otherwise—for Palestinians. Ideas such as "cross-border industrial zones" built along the "borders" of what some are calling "reservations" or "Bantustans"—isolated islands of land on roughly 40 to 50 percent of the West Bank where Palestinians are confined—will prove to be only another way for Israeli and Palestinian business elites to profit from the desperate and cheap Palestinian labor of a captive market. BDS advocates ask, Is this the type of future for Palestinians or Israelis in which any of us want to invest?

The recent Palestinian Authority bid for statehood at the United Nations notwithstanding, those who closely follow the conflict increasingly wonder if current realities have rendered a two-state solution unfeasible. If they are correct, then those who care about the well-being and security of

Palestinians and Israelis must imagine new ways for both to live side by side in justice, freedom and equality.

Palestinian Christian leaders underscore this need, describing a message of "love and living together" to the Muslims and Jews of the "Holy Land," condemning "all forms of racism." The Palestine Kairos call is for a "common vision, built on equality and sharing, not on superiority, negation of the other or aggression, using the pretext of fear and security." It is only in this manner that "justice and security will be attained for all."

The Kairos call understands peacebuilding as a shared work for justice. For more than 60 years, Mennonites have been present, building relationships, walking alongside Palestinians and Israelis with that same understanding of peacebuilding. We have heeded calls challenging us to work for justice in the United States and Canada, a work requiring our attention to the historical—and often unpleasant—truths about our roles in this conflict. It is a work that requires hope, courage and risk.

There is no excuse today for the church community to be at a loss on how to engage to bring peace and justice to the Holy Land. Palestinian civil society is leading the way.—Sam Bahour

There is much we have done, and much more we can do—and stop doing—as we seek to be faithful in our relationships. For example, last year Mennonite Church USA issued a formal response to the Kairos Palestine Document, committing to expand opportunities for Mennonite leaders to visit Palestine and learn firsthand about the suffering there. They also wrote a letter to members of Mennonite Church USA, asking them to read and discuss the Kairos Document, to study Scriptures together on the matter and to consider how their financial lives may be enmeshed in Israel's military occupation. In this response, there is the recognition of our relationships, "that the way of the cross binds together great love for every person and courageous resistance to injustice and sin," and the prayer "that as we journey together we will grow in our faithfulness to the One who leads the way and whom we proclaim as Lord and Savior."

Another example was a 2010 open letter by students from several Mennonite-related colleges and universities. In their letter they call for attention to and support for selective divestment from the Israeli Occupation. They state: "Our purpose is to promote peace in Israel/Palestine by first removing our complicity. We urge Mennonite churches and institutions to join us in resisting the structural violence of the illegal Israeli Occupation by making sure our investments are not supporting international law or human rights violations."

**This past October, MCC U.S. joined 14** other church leaders in writing to Congress urging an immediate investigation into possible violations by Israel of U.S. laws and policies which prohibit assistance to any country that engages in a consistent pattern of human rights violations. In the letter, church leaders also urged Congress to undertake careful scrutiny to ensure that U.S. aid is not supporting actions by the government of Israel that undermine prospects for peace.

Last fall, MCC published an issue of their *Peace Office Newsletter* devoted to this conversation, offering perspectives on the role of boycott, divestment and sanctions as a tool for resisting and ultimately transforming violent conflict (peace.mcc.org/system/files/PONL_July-Sept2012.pdf). In it we hear voices such as Sam Bahour's, a Palestinian businessman, who asks both about the presence and the agency of the church: "There is no excuse today for the church community to be at a loss on how to engage to bring peace and justice to the Holy Land. Palestinian civil society is leading the way."

We also hear Samia Khoury as she holds up the persistent witness of the Palestinian church, which, despite its shrinking presence due to the brutality of military occupation, begs the question most directly: What is our role, the role of the church in the United States? If not support of this effort at nonviolent resistance—BDS—what are we saying about the seriousness with which we are committed to the nonviolent transformation of conflict? And what are we saying about the seriousness with which we view the church in Palestine?

**This is again a question about the nature** of our relationships. The ongoing tragedy the people of Gaza and all of Palestine face daily does not warrant the question, What can we do? but rather, in the context of the BDS conversation, What do we need to stop doing? From the perspective of our relationships with Palestinians, it is most appropriately articulated as obligation: What do we owe our brothers and sisters?

The call to BDS is an invitation. "Leaders of North American churches frequently ask where the Palestinian nonviolent movement is." Bahour points out, "Well, it is here in Palestine and everywhere those who seek justice reside; it's alive and well and is called BDS. Everyone is invited to join." How will we respond?—*Timothy Seidel worked for more than seven years with Mennonite Central Committee, first as peace development worker in Palestine-Israel and then as director for Peace and Justice Ministries. He is a member of Community Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in international relations.*

# MCC helps 120 Gazan families with destroyed homes

## Joins other organizations calling on world leaders to enforce a ceasefire.

As casualties rise because of fighting between Israel and Hamas, the ruling party in the Gaza Strip, Mennonite Central Committee is sending emergency funds to help Gazan families whose homes have been bombed. In addition, MCC Palestine/Israel has joined 43 other organizations that are calling on world leaders to enforce a ceasefire.

Ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip erupted last November after Israel killed the military chief of Hamas. Since then, Hamas continued to fire rockets into Israel, and Israel conducted an intensive attack from air and sea.

"In Gaza there's nowhere to go to feel secure," says Joanna Hiebert Bergen, MCC Palestine/Israel representative with her spouse, Dan Bergen. They are from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and live in Jerusalem.

Gazans have limited space to move out of harm's way and no safe shelters in which to take refuge. Israel controls and restricts the flow of goods and people in and out of Gaza, so Palestinians there are unable to escape constant bombardment by fleeing to another country or safer space. Getting medical supplies into Gaza is also difficult, even for the United Nations, Hiebert Bergen says. Hospitals are overcrowded and supplies are limited.

Through a media statement issued by the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), MCC Palestine/Israel and the other organizations are asking world leaders to enforce a ceasefire, to deal with ongoing human rights abuses in Gaza and to address root causes of the conflict, says Hiebert Bergen.

She underlines the need to implement the 2009 UN Security Council Resolution 1860, which laid out a plan for reaching a permanent ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and a path to long-term security for both sides. The plan emphasizes the importance of the safety and well-being of all civilians.

**In Gaza, violence, poverty and unemployment** are constant threats. MCC's partners work with programs that strengthen people's ability to grow their own food, earn a living and get an education. However, the bombing has threatened livelihoods and closed schools that children and adults were attending.

All three of MCC's partner organizations in Gaza have reported bombing that seems random, making it impossible to feel safe, says Bassem Thabet, MCC Palestine/Israel director of partner relations. People are running to neighbors' or family members' homes, not because it's safer but because they need to be together, he says.

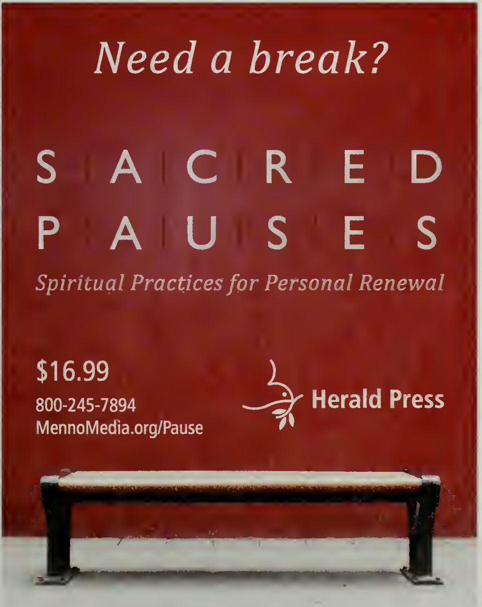
Majeda Al Saqqa, who works with MCC partner Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA), says her family cannot sleep at night, fearing their house will be destroyed by a missile just like their neighbor's house was demolished, Thabet says.

People must leave their windows open, he says. If they don't, the reverberations of the bombs can break them.

**All of MCC's partners are scared, he says,** but they also are risking their lives to determine need and to purchase and distribute supplies, supported by $20,000 from MCC's emergency budget. In addition to CFTA, MCC also works with the Near East Council of Churches and Al-Najd Development Forum.

Al-Najd and CFTA will purchase mattresses, pillows, blankets and kitchen utensils for 60 families in Khan Younis and 60 families in the Gaza City area. All the families' homes have been destroyed by the bombing, Hiebert Bergen says.

Only peace will bring security to Israel and Gaza in the future, says Thabet. Continued violence will only bring more hatred and more violence.—*Linda Espenshade of Mennonite Central Committee*



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## WORKERS

**Akerson, James**, was ordained as pastor at Beldor Mennonite Church, Elkton, Va., on Dec. 2, 2012.

**Baruti, Maurice**, was licensed as lead pastor of French Speaking for Revival, Elkins Park, Pa., on Oct. 21, 2012.

**Detweiler, Randy**, began a term as lead pastor at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind., on Nov. 5, 2012.

**Fyffe, Joshua**, was licensed as pastor at West Liberty Mennonite Church, West Liberty, Ky., on Nov. 18, 2012.

**Kaye, Caleb**, was licensed as assistant pastor at Capital Christian Fellowship, Lanham, Md., on Dec. 2, 2012.

**Nickel, David James**, was ordained at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, Chapel Hill, N.C., for his prison chaplaincy ministry with Alamance/Orange Prison Ministry.

**Scott, Christopher**, was licensed for his church planting ministry with The Exchange, Winchester, Va., at Stephens City Mennonite Church, Stephens City, Va., on Dec. 2.

## OBITUARIES

**Allebach, Emma S. Nice**, 89, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 21, 2012. Spouse: Willard M. Allebach (deceased). Spouse: Abram S. Clemmer (deceased). Parents: William K. and Mary S. Strohm Nice. Children: Gerald N. Clemmer, Kenneth J. Clemmer, Gary Clemmer; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 26 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

**Benner, Marie M. Moyer**, 88, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 18, 2012. Spouse: Charles B. Benner (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Sadie Moyer Moyer. Children: Dennis M., C. David, Christine Seasholtz, Timothy, Neil; 13 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 22 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

**Brunk, Milford Franklin**, 90, Bluffton, Ohio, died Dec. 5, 2012. Frank was born June 9, 1922, in Biglerville, Pa., to Christian and Jeannette Leakey Brunk. He was the oldest of six siblings. He married Beatrice Hartman on June 19, 1948, in Wissemborg, France, during the last year of a two-year term with MCC where he was part of a postwar reconstruction unit. They had three children: one son, Rene', and two daughters, Susie and Jeannette. Frank's love for nature and its beauty were reflected in his lifelong choices of work and recreation. He was a member of the Audubon Society in Phoenix, Ariz. He organized and led camping trips to Mexico and Northern Arizona and hikes down Havasu Canyon for the youth and young adults at Sunnyslope Mennonite Church. Frank and Bea moved their family to Colorado in the early 1960s when he became Director of Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp. During those twenty years, he designed and built buildings in the Swiss Chalet architectural style. He took classes in rock climbing and taught many campers how to rapel off the face of Monkey Rock. His love of hiking resulted in his climbing 43 "fourteen-ers," as the 14,000 foot high mountains of Colorado are fondly referred to. Frank was an expert at identifying hundreds of wildflowers that grew below and above the tundra line. He was convinced that no other wildflowers could compare to the beauty of those growing in the Rocky Mountains. Following retirement from RMMC, Frank became an amateur naturalist and docent at Bear Creek Nature Center in Colorado Springs. He was a member of the AdAmAn Society, a group of professional men who hiked Pikes Peak every New Year's Eve to give Colorado Springs a midnight fireworks show as a way of celebrating the new year. In the last months of his life, as he was mostly confined to lying in bed, he would often say, "Like the Navajos, I see beauty in everything." The following is an excerpt from the "Traditional Navajo Prayer."

May it be
beautiful before me,
May it be beautiful behind me,
May it be beautiful below me,
May it be beautiful above me,
May it be beautiful all around me.
I am restored in beauty.
I am restored in beauty.
I am restored in beauty.
I am restored in beauty.

He is survived by his wife, Beatrice Brunk of Bluffton, Ohio, daughter Susie and son-in-law Bill Swartley of Bluffton, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Frank was preceded in death by a son, Rene Brunk and daughter, Jeannette Gingerich. A memorial fund has been established at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp to honor the life and work of Frank. Contributions may be sent to the Frank Brunk Memorial Fund, RMMC, 709 County Road 62, Divide, CO 80814.

**Burkholder, Nelson Reuben**, 97, Stuarts Draft, Va., died Dec. 18, 2012. Spouse: Ruth Sandridge Burkholder (deceased). Joan Lowry Burkholder (deceased). Parents: Reuben and Effie Grove Burkholder. Children: Nancy Humphreys, Pat Eagle, Linda Faistenhammer; 12 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 21 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Ebersole, Lewy**, 81, Sarasota, Fla., died April 17, 2012, of heart failure. Spouse: Betty Jean Yoder Ebersole. Parents: Walter and Sylvia Beyeler Ebersole. Children: Phil, Keith, Miriam Showalter, Jay Vaughn; eight grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota, and April 28 at Berlin Mennonite Church, Berlin, Ohio.

**Gochnauer, Anna Myrtle Bowers**, 91, Mount Joy, Pa., died Dec. 6, 2012. Spouse: John B. Gochnauer (deceased). Parents: Jacob H. and Anna Myrtle Landis Bowers. Children: Donald, Anna Mary Knier, John R., David E.; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 10 at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

**Godshall, Dorothy M. Moyer**, 98, West Rockhill Twp., Pa., died Dec. 19, 2012. Spouse: Lewis M. Godshall (deceased). Parents: Abraham B. and Clara G. Beidler Moyer. Children: Ruth Ann Peddigree, J.Keith, Joel; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 27 at Rockhill Mennonite Community, Sellersville, Pa.

**Kauffman, Maxine**, 87, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 11, 2012, of cancer. Parents: Alvin and Alma Showalter Kauffman. Funeral: Oct. 16 at Clinton Brick Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**King, Forrest Dale**, 76, Harrisonburg, Va., died Nov. 29, 2012, of colon cancer. Spouse: Faye Delores Bowman King. Parents: Archie Leon and Sadie Fern King. Children: Kendra Shickel, Krista Powell; six grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 12 at Mount Vernon Mennonite Church, Grottoes, Va.

**Kroeker, Peter J.**, 79, Altona, Manitoba, died Dec. 10, 2012. Spouse: Ruth Kroeker. Parents: Johann G. and Anna Toews Kroeker. Children: Darryl, Bernice Giesbrecht, Michelle Falk; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Osborne, Eva Lucille Troyer**, 99, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 20, 2012. Spouse: Chester Osborne. Parents: Emanuel and Maizie Kendall Troyer. Children: Zonda Befort, Phil, Rachel Koppenhaver, Dave, Stan, Grace Osborne, Conrad; 18 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 22 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Rempel, Averno**, 93, Eugene, Ore., died Nov. 20, 2012. Spouse: Wendlyn Reimer Rempel. Parents: George and Helena Schultz Rempel. Children: Donna Bontrager, Jim, Gerry; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 6 at Eugene Mennonite Church.

**Ruth, Sara F. Detwiler**, 91, Souderton, Pa., died Nov. 5, 2012. Spouse: Leidy S. Ruth (deceased). Enos B Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Tyson and Lizzie Freed Detwiler. Children: Clyde Hunsberger, Glenn Hunsberger, Marian Bickerstaff; six grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 11 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

**Scheufler, Virginia M. Carr**, 79, Dundee, Ohio, died Dec. 11, 2012. Spouse: Charles W. Scheufler (deceased). Parents: Wade T. and Tillie J. Cole Carr. Funeral: Dec. 14 at North Lima Mennonite Church, North Lima, Ohio.

**Shank, Lester C.**, 96, Lititz, Pa., died Dec. 10, 2012. Spouse: Araminta Lois Lehman Shank (deceased). Parents: Clinton and Edith Camilla Rutherford Shank. Children: Norman, Esther Bucher, Mary Swartz, Miriam Cruz, Ruthi Blackman; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Landis Homes Retirement Community, Lititz.

**Vetch, Jackson Lee**, 15, Freeman, S.D., died Dec. 12, 2012. Parents: Shane and Amy Hofer Vetch. Sibling: Morgan. Funeral: Dec. 15 at Freeman High School Gym.

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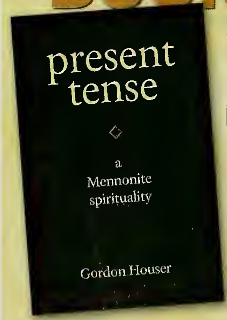

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—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
*—John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

*Johann* was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
*—Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

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**Springdale Mennonite Church**, Waynesboro, Va., is looking for a full-time ***lead pastor*** or a ***husband-wife co-pastor team***. This is our primary interest; however, all applications will be considered. Anticipated starting date is April/May 2013. Springdale is an active participant in Mennonite Church USA and Virginia Mennonite Conference. Membership is 160 and attendance around 120-130. We are looking for a candidate with strong skills in preaching, pastoral care and church leadership from an Anabaptist perspective. Mennonite Church USA guidelines for salary and benefits will be followed. Church website: www.springdale-mennonite.org. Contact person: Danny Showalter, chair of search committee, email dcs@ntelos.net, telephone 540-943-2392.

# The work of marriage: a conversation

**Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz** lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

Marriage has been on my mind lately, and after my husband read my draft, he was dismayed with how sad it sounded. He went off and wrote how he viewed marriage. I then merged both our ideas as if we were having a conversation. My hope is that you're able to see how well we complement each other.

**Janet:** After 10 years, I stand at the crossroads of commitment and honest with battle wounds to show the conflicts we've endured. We have carried our struggles mostly in isolation from others, and I've hesitated to even share them with my partner.

**Roberto:** I've been learning that it's one thing to carry on as individuals in marriage and another to be together in this. I suspect that a committed partnership is the most creative relationship on earth and a constant discovery of myself and us as a couple.

**J:** With 16 sessions of premarital counseling, I believed we were all set for success. But it seems it's taken 10 years to begin to truly unravel our parents' relationship and the preconceived ideas we had.

**R:** Marriage for me has been a chance to know myself more thoroughly: my story, the parental influences and culture—being able to look in the mirror with the qualities and defects of my personal story.

> Marriage is like jumping out of an airplane in a parachute: You cannot control it, it's intense and it's glorious.
> —Roberto

**J:** And so life brings us back to therapy for awhile, and that's helpful. The work of marriage keeps us there and gives us tools to move forward in hope that things will be different one day. But for me, the larger question is, What now while we wait for real change within me, within us?

**R:** I'm humbled in realizing that you cannot put your spouse in a box that defines her and tells me what to expect. I cannot predict or control my partner in this relationship. I receive her as an opportunity to learn how to love. I've been learning to let go and hope for the best in her.

**J:** I'll be the first to admit that I had this illusion that a husband would meet all my needs—one who, as we were told as little girls, is a knight in shining armor. And I did experience a sense of security being married, but as you fall into the holes you've created of larger-than-life expectations, you begin to close your heart. You become protective of what's within you, and this wall that is created becomes thicker with time.

**R:** She has helped me know more, experience more grace and self-forgiveness. It's been a call to openness and knowing each other. I choose to accept and appreciate my wife in all her glory, to rejoice and feel privileged to be at her side. I embrace my vulnerability and empathy.

**J:** I feel like a novice in all this, but I don't know what marriage looks like for us. It's easy to feel lost and duped into believing it is more than it really is. And now I'm putting the pieces together again.

**R:** Marriage is like jumping out of an airplane in a parachute: You cannot control it, it's intense and it's glorious. One never again is the same after jumping into the void.

**J:** And so today, I find myself in the tension of longing for a deep and meaningful partner relationship, with eyes wide open, seeing who we both are. I'm trying to be honest about our limitations, the limitations of a committed relationship, the give and the take and the "what's left" for me to meet on my own.

**R:** I have understood that marriage is not two separate individuals with qualities, needs and flaws that are in the same boat for life. Rather, it's a relationship with oneself while seeking to birth something together. Being married is more than 1+1. It's synergy. It's an intense hurricane on the one hand, and a calm and peaceful morning in the other. Marriage is what we are together. It is a party where I am invited many times in many ways to learn how to love and be loved.

**J:** And this is why I am with this guy. Even with all my doubts and struggles, he's exactly what I need because he shows me another way.

## BEST FILMS OF 2012

1. **A Separation**
2. **Lincoln**
3. **Zero Dark Thirty**
4. **Argo**
5. **Beasts of the Southern Wild**
6. **Life of Pi**
7. **Moonrise Kingdom**
8. **Cloud Atlas**
9. **The Perks of Being a Wallflower**
10. **The Invisible War**

—*Gordon Houser*

## BEST BOOKS OF 2012

**Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church** by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek

**Dear Life: Stories** by Alice Munro

**Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament** by Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld

**The Round House: A Novel** by Louise Erdrich

**When I Was a Child I Read Books: Essays** by Marilynne Robinson—*gh*

## FILM REVIEWS

**Zero Dark Thirty** (R) chronicles the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden after the September 2001 attacks and his death at the hands of the Navy S.E.A.L. Team 6 in May 2011. This riveting film uses an intelligent script and an outstanding performance by Jessica Chastain to follow the trail of clues and tenacity required to find bin Laden. While its depiction of obtaining information from torture is misleading, it shows its horror.—*gh*

**Silver Linings Playbook** (R) shows the struggle of a man who moves into his parents' home after eight months in a state institution. Wanting to reconcile with his ex-wife, he meets Tiffany, who has problems of her own. The film has some fine acting and makes good points about general dysfunction but follows the predictable lines of a romantic comedy.—*gh*

# Rape in the military

Kirby Dick's gut-wrenching documentary *The Invisible War* (No. 10 on my list of best films of 2012) explores the preponderance of rape in the U.S. military.

The film uses interviews of victims of sexual assault with cases going back to the 1960s and up to the present. While each story has its particular differences, all reflect the double horror of not only being raped but seeing their perpetrators walk away.

In addition, many are injured in the assaults and can't get proper medical care for the long-term effects of those injuries, physical and psychological.

The film reveals the unjust military system that provides no accountability to rapists. There is no court these victims can appeal to. Instead, each unit is under the authority of a unit commander, who serves as judge and jury in such cases. At times, this person is the perpetrator, and the victim is left with no recourse but to resign, often with a dishonorable discharge.

Those interviewed for the film joined the armed services (whether Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard) out of a strong patriotism. Many had other family members who had military careers.

The statistics, which, the film notes, all come from the Department of Defense, are alarming:

- more than 20 percent of women in the U.S. military have been sexually assaulted;
- in 1991, over 200,000 had reported sexual assault;
- 80 percent of assaults are not reported;
- 15 percent of recruits have committed rape before entering the military;
- 40 percent of homeless female veterans have been raped;
- women who have been raped have a higher PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) rate than men who have been in combat;
- 1 percent of men (20,000 per year) in the military are sexually assaulted (and not by homosexuals);
- the average sex offender has 300 victims.

The film also interviews counselors in the film who point out that when there is no accountability for sexual assaults, that is an invitation for sex offenders to do as they wish.

Congress has tried to address this travesty, and each time, spokespeople for the military insist they have a no-tolerance policy. Yet it continues without abate. And since the military is outside the civil court system, victims have no recourse. The courts have ruled that rape is an occupational hazard of the military.

The military does acknowledge some cases. In 2010, it catalogued 3,158 cases of sexual assault, but only a sixth of these came to court-martial, and only 175 men, one in 20 of those charged, did any jail time.

Major General Mary Kay Kellogg, director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, tells the camera that assault victims should petition the Defense Department's Attorney General. But of the 2,994 cases forwarded to the AG, not one was investigated.

We learn that one woman's assailant "is still in the Air Force and was awarded Airman of the Year during her rape investigation." Another assailant "became a supervisor at a major U.S. corporation and sexually assaulted a female employee. He was never charged and lives in Queens, N.Y."

Last April 14, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta watched the film. Two days later he took the decision to prosecute away from commanders.

It's something, but it's not nearly enough. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

*(Continued from page 5)*

Guadalupe Church in Newton, Kan., in the bilingual and ecumenical worship service that concluded the 2012 Dia de los Muertos activities, noted that it is a time to remember and honor "the souls of the faithful departed. They are in a better place, which is why there are many different colors, songs, feasts, music, dancing, flowers—it's a celebration of joy.

"Death is to go to sleep on earth," he told the congregation, "and wake up in heaven."

Christ came to deliver us from death, which does not mean we won't die—we will all die—but that we have no reason to fear death. That is what makes el Dia de los Muertos "a celebration of joy," of life and of the faith that makes those things possible. *—Melanie Zuercher, writer for Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.*

### Responding to shootings

Recent news of shootings of school children in Connecticut remind us of similar news from Amish country Pennsylvania. What can the churches do? Teach truth on oath and demystify liturgy.*—James A. Neufeld, Winnipeg, Manitoba*

### Will miss Kniss columns

I hope your "goodbye" will not be forever, Sharon Kniss. Your final regular column, "What I've Learned from Mennonites" (New Voices, December 2012), ends on a note of optimism and hope: that we Mennonites continue to hold to essential New Testament "particularities" that are far less common, even largely missing, in other denominations. As you say, this "third way" so natural for us—what we too often simply take for granted—is often less apparent in many other church traditions.

Amazingly, you mention discipleship as one of these "distinctives." And I wholeheartedly agree with you when you say discipleship "was a new concept for many Church of England and other Christian adherents." I would add that neither is discipleship central to classical Protestantism or even general Catholicism (it does surface naturally in Catholic monastic groups). I also agree that for Mennonites overall, "the value of community is distinctive."

I'm glad you've learned from other traditions; we all need to reach out in this regard as we at the same time realize where our own roots lie.

Please keep *The Mennonite* in mind. We need your profound insights, founded as they are on distinctives essential for living out a New Testament faith as we follow the Jesus of Galilee, walking together in his resurrection. *—Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

## RESOURCES

**Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty and Early Christian Formation** by Helen Rhee (BakerAcademic, 2012, $29.99) analyzes the significance of wealth and poverty in constructing Christian identity in the complex socioeconomic situation and cultural milieu of the early Roman Empire. Rhee shows how early Christians adopted, appropriated and transformed the Jewish and Greco-Roman moral teachings and practices of giving and patronage.

**Personal Jesus: How Popular Music Shapes Our Souls** by Clive Marsh and Vaughan S. Roberts (BakerAcademic, 2012, $22.99) show that popular music is used by religious and nonreligious people alike to make meaning, enabling listeners to explore human concerns about embodiment, create communities and tap into transcendence.

**The Rest of Life: Rest, Play, Eating, Studying, Sex from a Kingdom Perspective** by Ben Witherington III (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) shows why and how all the normal activities of life should be done to the glory of God and for the edification of others, in light of biblical teaching about the kingdom of God and the Christian hope for the future.

**A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions About Christian Care for Animals** by Tripp York and Andy Alexis-Baker (Cascade Books, 2012, $23) assembles provocative essays from authors of various denominational, national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds to wrestle with the text, theology and tradition in order to answer questions about Christian care of animals.

**Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict** by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (Columbia University Press, 2011, $29.50) argues that nonviolent resistance is more than twice as successful as armed struggle, even in the face of brutal regime repression. The authors, both social scientists, examined 323 violent and nonviolent uprisings from around the world between 1900 and 2006.

**Why Can't We Talk? Christian Wisdom on Dialogue as a Habit of the Heart** by John Backman (SkyLight Paths, 2012, $16.99) illustrates that drawing close to God, acting in concert with God's desires and practicing virtues of our faith are as important as interpersonal skills in effective dialogue.

**Dementia: Living in the Memories of God** by John Swinton (Eerdmans, 2012, $25) develops a practical theology of dementia for caregivers, people with dementia, ministers, hospital chaplains and medical practitioners that explores two primary questions: Who am I when I've forgotten who I am? What does it mean to love God and be loved by God when I have forgotten who God is?

# God sightings: God and the new Subaru

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

It seems presumptuous to say that we've seen God at work in specific ways. I've often cringed when I heard people tell about the way God answered their prayers—in a way that seemed out of character with the God of Scripture.

Early in December 2012, I conversed with a group of leaders about the need to look for God at work in the world. Reflecting on that conversation, a pastor wrote me, asking: "Can I offer an encouragement? You'll remember at our Saturday meeting that many of us talked about being alienated by people who glibly put God at the front of all their sentences. ("God told me to buy this Mercedes.") Might you write a … column in *The Mennonite* about the difference between authentically naming what God is doing and this kind of superficial (and often selfish) 'God talk'? In other words, how can we talk about God—and in God's name—in ways that are reverent, humble and truthful?"

Great idea. The pastor's mention of a Mercedes triggered two memories for me. The first was a flashback to a moment more than 40 years ago when I was riding with a carload of friends from my church youth group. We were listening to Janis Joplin sing, "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz?"

Perhaps the pastor was thinking of that song as well, a humorous example of the "junk mail" requests God often gets in prayer correspondence from us.

**The pastor's note also reminded me** of an incident that took place one weekend about 20 years ago among a group of friends in a Mennonite congregation near my home. A businessman named Dan, along with his wife Naomi, went shopping for a new car. In the showroom they were both drawn to a Mercedes-Benz. They could clearly afford the car but hesitated to close the deal. They agreed with each other that they wanted to see if God had anything to say to them before they made the purchase. So they decided not to say anything to anyone about it, waiting to see if God would speak to them about it by some means other than the opinion of friends.

The following Sunday at the worship service, God answered their prayer in an unexpected way.

As was the custom in that church, the congregation had a time of worship and singing, followed by a time of "listening" prayer. The worshippers were invited to listen for God's voice and then share with the congregation what they were hearing or seeing. A young woman named Teresa stood up and said that she was seeing a sporty car up on a pedestal. She was also seeing a red light flashing and hearing a voice that was saying no. She admitted she had no idea what this "picture" meant but that perhaps someone else would.

**Dan and Naomi took this as** God's answer to their request for discernment and decided not to buy the car. Because they had already saved up cash for a new car, they asked God what to do with the money. They sensed God telling them to use it to buy a new car for the pastor of the church, since his car was practically worn out.

So they deposited a good sum of money into a church account and invited others to contribute to the fund. Within a few weeks, the church bought the pastor a brand new Subaru.

> I've often cringed when I heard people tell about the way God answered their prayers—in a way that seemed out of character with the God of scripture.

I've had several rides in that Subaru. As I reflect on what happened prior to the purchase of that car, I can see God at work in at least the following ways: helping Dan prosper as a businessman, prompting Dan and Naomi to listen for God's voice in financial decisions, granting a prophetic gift to Teresa, prompting Dan and Naomi to give generously, and prompting the congregation to bless their pastor.

A God sighting indeed. TM

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# The real and the foolish

Everett J. Thomas

*God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.*
—1 Corinthians 1:25

While watching Executive Board members taking a prayer walk through Phoenix on Jan. 9 (see page 33), I was struck by how futile—even foolish—the gesture seemed.

The Arizona industry built up around the detention and deportation of undocumented residents is huge—and profitable for some. The massive Maricopa County Supreme Court building, a large detention center nearby and one of sheriff Joe Arpaio's numerous facilities testify to the resolve and power wielded by state and federal authorities as they administer a broken immigration system.

This summer, participants at the Phoenix convention will be invited to take a similar walk through those beautifully landscaped streets that mask so much misery. At certain points along the way, participants will stop in silence, kneel and pray. According to André Gingerich Stoner, one of the organizers, the walk is designed to cultivate "a long, loving gaze at the real."

Cultivate a long, loving gaze at the real.—André Gingerich Stoner

It is very real, and it is ugly.

But there are other realities as well. It is from them we can draw hope.

While President Obama's administration continues to deport record numbers of undocumented residents, a few small ministries light candles in the darkness.

Through a Tucson, Ariz.-based program called BorderLinks, several dozen of us visited both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border in the binational city of Nogales, Ariz./Mexico. In small groups and with translators, we talked to people recently picked up by the U.S. Border Patrol and unceremoniously deposited back in Mexico.

One 20-something mother had lived in Oxnard, Calif., for years; when she was deported she left behind a husband, three U.S. born children and an employer who wanted her help picking strawberries. We were told that just having people listen to their stories without judgment was a comfort to these would-be immigrants.

The high point for our trip, however, was dinner at Casa Mariposa in Tucson, a hospitality house for people released from immigration detention. The primary benefit for those detained is a physical address—a requirement for release.

The evening we visited, four young men—recently released—were enjoying the hospitality. Marco, the rotund and effusive chef, told us his story after dinner. He had been in detention seven years. One day, he said, he told God, "I am tired of praying to you and nothing happens. If nothing happens today I will stop praying."

That day, a BorderLinks staff member succeeded in raising the bond money necessary for his release.

Ministries such as BorderLinks and Casa Mariposa are miniscule when compared with the machinery of government detention and deportation. But in the face of untold human misery, they offer some relief to a few.

Several times I have heard Stoner say convention participants should not go to the Phoenix convention expecting to fix Arizona but should participate to learn about the system—and take those learnings home. That and praying for "God's foolishness" to abound is about all we will be able to do. And as we pray, we may be as frustrated and feel as hopeless as did Marco on his last day in detention.—*ejt*

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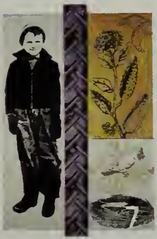

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*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

### Startled by quote

While I appreciated the article by Elena Yoder, "Death and Spirituality" (February), I was startled when I came to the quotation at the end by Edgar Cayce who was a psychic, believed in reincarnation and did "readings" while in a trance state, among other strange practices. I wish Yoder had quoted another source to wrap up her otherwise excellent article.—*Ramona Hartzler, North Lawrence, Ohio*

### What more can we do?

I want to say thanks to Timothy Seidel for his excellent article, "Prayer and Action for Gaza" (February). I am grateful for what the Mennonite church has done, but what more can we do? Nothing seems to change. I'm sure I'm not the only one who writes to our officials in Washington, but how are we going to get significant action by Israel to stop its inhumane actions in Gaza? I continue to pray.—*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

### Naughty to include letter

Sticking that letter about Mennonites and obesity in Everett Thomas' January editorial gave it voice. I think Thomas was having a naughty bit of fun with it. I say this ever so kind-spiritedly. —*Shirley Kurtz, Keyser, W.V.*

### Wrong person

While I found the letter on page 4 of the February issue to be a valuable reminder that we Anabaptists, as well as our brothers and sisters who identify as Evangelicals, both need to seek better balance when it comes to being consistently pro-life and nonviolent across the whole spectrum of these issues, I am not the author of the letter that appears in this issue. I know there are some other Stan Kauffmans out there among *The Mennonite*'s constituency—perhaps one of these others is the author?—*Stan Kauffman, Pellston, Mich.*

**Editor's note:** *We apologize for the error. To subscribers who receive the magazine through bulk mailings to churches: When sending a letter by email, please include the town and state in which you live.*

### Will we have dialogue?

I have been Mennonite all my life, but I am seriously questioning why I remain with this denomination—a denomination that has chosen again and again to side with the social liberals in this country.

I expect the liberal media and politicians to twist the truth to make it say whatever they want, censoring what they don't want. But I do not take it lightly when my denomination chooses to promote the same "twisting of truth" through the columns and opinions they choose to put in print. A case in point is the January Opinion column, "The Confession of Faith and Marriage," which takes great satisfaction in proving our confession of faith makes allowance for differing sexual lifestyles.

More than 12 years ago, the editor and board for *The Mennonite* chose to put a moratorium on the subject of sexuality. This ban is evidently only one sided. There are opinions and articles that put forward the "alternative" perspective, but it seems the moratorium is used to censor articles with any hint of biblical truth on the subject.

We are told we should remain in dialogue with those of different opinions. But I ask, Where is the dialogue? For now it appears we are not in dialogue about anything. It appears that once again it is those of the liberal persuasion that attempt to shut down the voice of the opposition.

We of the Evangelical persuasion on human sexuality are not telling others how to live their lives. But we are not willing to let them redefine right and wrong. Stop telling me I must change to accept your view if you won't let me keep and express mine. Either we have a dialogue or we don't. Which is it? —*Willard Eberly, Manheim, Pa.*

**Editor's note:** *As reported in a December 2012 news story and in the January editorial, we have revised the moratorium on letters and articles addressing Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality. For another voice on the subject, see also the February Opinion column written by Harold Miller.*

### They were great enablers

It was a great pleasure to see Robert Kreider on the January cover of *The Mennonite* and to read Laurie Oswald Robinson's sketch. Obviously Robinson could not cover every role Robert has played well, and one she omitted was how he enabled younger colleagues.

From the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, he and I worked closely together and with other historians to get out four books in the state-of-the-art "Mennonite Experience in America" series. In effect he was chairman of the board, and I, as editor, was chief executive officer.

At the outset I did not know him well, and he flustered me by putting so many research ideas on the table that I feared we might never get to the point of publishing. Soon, however, I recognized that he was just letting his fertile mind roll and that his suggestions were a rich resource. Further, I saw that he was offering lots of practical advice and that he and Lois were dipping generously into their own funds to help the project along. So let me add this to Robinson's fine sketch: For the next generation of Mennonite scholars, Robert and Lois were great enablers. —*Theron F. Schlabach, Goshen, Ind.*

### Mennonite or Christian?

Regarding Peter Epp's New Voices column (January): Thanks for helping us look at the issue of our religious identity from multiple perspectives. When pushed for a religious identity in similar conversations, I've generally been drawn toward identifying myself as a "follower of Jesus." But even that can have overtones of self-righteousness because when we stand alongside Jesus, our identity is clearly "sinner—graciously received."—*Kurt Horst, Hesston, Kan.*

### Authors create straw man

Regarding "Post-Christendom or Neo-Christendom?" (February): Ron Adams and Isaac Villegas seem to have created a straw man in arguing that "to declare Christendom's demise misleads us into thinking that Christians are now marginalized victims."

I'm unaware of anyone who has suggested in print or otherwise that Christians are "a persecuted minority within the cultural and political systems of Western societies." They seem to confuse evidence of cultural survivals with signs of the continued vitality of "Christendom."

Since until recent times a great majority of Americans identified themselves as Protestant Christians, it is hardly surprising that politicians quote the Bible or refer to our Judeo-Christian heritage.

Our political and legal institutions, our language and literature, and much else reflect the British origin of a comparable majority of European settlers in what were British colonies. But I'd be surprised if even the most devoted

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Two themes emerged as we put together this issue: how to interpret the Bible and the changing dynamics for under-represented racial/ethnic members of Mennonite Church USA.

Delegates at the Pittsburgh 2011 convention supported something called Year of the Bible. As Gordon Houser explains in his News Brief (page 7), this is not a set plan for a certain calendar year. Rather, it is a year of study with a design and schedule set by each participating congregation. As a resource to those creating their own plan, we publish articles about biblical interpretation written by well-known Mennonite scholars.

"We should get used to the idea," says retired professor J. Denny Weaver (page 18), "that not all writings in the Bible speak with the same voice."

We invited J. Nelson Kraybill, former seminary president and now a pastor, to respond to Weaver's article.

"The interpretive task of the church is to discern underlying themes and directions in the [Bible's] big narrative," Kraybill says (page 22), "then use what the Holy Spirit shows us to make practical application for our lives today."

Several articles focus on new dynamics for racial/ethnic members of Mennonite Church USA. Wil LaVeist (page 32) provides extensive reporting on the Jan. 25-27 Hope for the Future conference that drew 60 Mennonite Church USA leaders.

Convention planners announce plans for two offerings at Phoenix 2013, including a goal of raising $15,000 for undocumented young adults, informally called DREAMers (page 36). A third article focuses on Erica Littlewolf (page 40) and her work with indigenous or aboriginal people in the United States and Canada.—*Editor*

## Richard Twiss, scheduled speaker at Phoenix, dies

ELKHART, Ind.—Richard Twiss, 58, of Vancouver, Wash., a member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate from the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, passed away Feb. 9 after suffering a heart attack earlier in the week in Washington, D.C. He was slated to speak in Phoenix on July 1 at the opening adult worship service of Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention.

Twiss was president of Wiconi International, an organization that works to promote community, strengthen culture and foster spiritual vitality among Native American or First Nations people. Wiconi means "life" in the Lakota/Sioux language; Twiss and his wife, Katherine, founded the organization in 1997.

According to Wiconi International's website (www.wiconi.com), Twiss was committed to "creating opportunities for the betterment of our Native people and communities through advancing education, culture, family and spirituality—in the Spirit of Jesus." He was a widely traveled and popular speaker, activist, educator, author and networker among innovative thinkers within the Native North American and Indigenous community internationally. He held a doctorate in intercultural studies (cultural anthropology, primal and folk religions and the history of Christian mission) from Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky. He and his wife had four sons.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Bluffton University

## Gish addresses Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship

Peggy Gish (left) speaks with Tamara Al-Sammarraie, a Bluffton (Ohio) University junior from Iraq, after presenting a workshop about Christian Peacemaker Teams' efforts in Iraq at the 2013 Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship conference, hosted by Bluffton Feb. 8-10. Gish, of Athens, Ohio, is the author of *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace* and is now writing a second book in which she continues telling the stories of the Iraqi people and of her experiences. About 200 people attended various events during the weekend peace conference, whose theme was, "Spirituality and Shalom: Living at the Intersection of Faith and Justice."—*Bluffton University*

## MCC on NRA's 'most threatening' list

ELKHART, Ind.—On Feb. 1, *Mother Jones* magazine reported that the National Rifle Association (NRA) put Mennonite Central Committee on a list entitled "The 12 Most Threatening People." On Feb. 5, MCC spokesperson Cheryl Zehr Walker said she was not exactly sure why MCC made the list, but "it's doing so is consistent with our gun violence prevention efforts."

*Mother Jones* said the NRA published a list in September 2012 that included several hundred nonprofits, celebrities, companies, and news organizations that "have lent monetary, grassroots or some other type of direct support to antigun organizations." The eclectic list also included the Southern Poverty Law Center and singer Barry Manilow.

"Gun violence is epidemic in the United States," says MCC's website, "with approximately 30,000 gun deaths each year. These statistics include homicides, suicides, accidental death and 'legal interventions' (self-defense or police actions). Of these, suicides are the most common cause of gun death, with legal interventions making up just 1 percent of the total. Our shared humanity compels us to care about God's children dying from gun violence on the streets of Philadelphia, Washington, Los Angeles and elsewhere. Churches have begun to say, 'It doesn't have to be this way. We can do something.' "—*Everett J. Thomas*

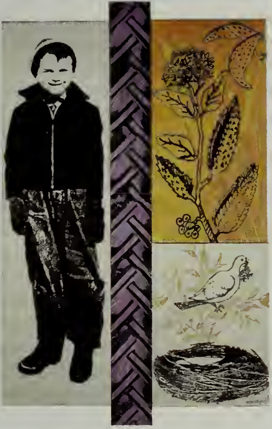
## Anabaptists meet Down Under on multifaith world

SYDNEY, Australia—January 26 is Australia Day, the equivalent of the U.S. Fourth of July. Over the Australia Day weekend the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand (AANZ) held its biennial conference in Sydney with the theme "From Pieces to Peace: More Than Just Neighbours in a Multifaith World."

More than just a talkfest about interfaith issues, the planners hoped for a weekend where participants would experience interfaith community. Speakers represented different faiths—Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist.

The conference began with a traditional Aboriginal acknowledgement of place and country led by Ray Minniecon, an Aboriginal pastor and leader of World Vision Australia's Indigenous program. He reminded those gathered that Aboriginals call Australia Day Invasion Day.

He said, "Think what it was like for Jewish people in Germany during the Nazi regime." It is a day for mourning and not celebration for the original inhabitants of Australia.



Goshen College

## Art exhibit displays Hershberger's Mennonite 'iconography'

"Boy with Milkweed" by Goshen (Ind.) College professor emeritus of art Abner Hershberger is part of his art exhibit "Heritage Works" in the college's Good Library Gallery from Feb. 10 to March 28. The exhibit includes 33 paintings that explore symbols of Mennonite farm life and living.—*Goshen College*

Dave Andrews gave the first presentation of the weekend, "The Anabaptist Tradition and Peaceful Christlike Interfaith Conversations." He and his wife, Ange, and their family have lived and worked in intentional communities with marginalized groups of people in Australia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal for more than 30 years. He now lives in a large joint household with his wife, children, grandchildren and others in an inner-city community called the Waiters Union in Brisbane, Australia. Interfaith conversations have kept Dave busy in recent years.

In his talk, Andrews addressed many of the questions Christians raise when thinking about relating to people of other faiths. "Isn't our task to convert others?" "No," he said, "Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our task is to be a witness."—*Mark S. Hurst and Nathan Hobby*

## Congregation plans for Year of the Bible

NEWTON, Kan.—First Mennonite Church in Hutchinson, Kan., invited its members to memorize a Psalm as part of its Lenten worship services. Then in the fall the congregation plans to launch its version of the Year of the Bible.

The Year of the Bible, a project supported by Pittsburgh 2011 delegates, is not one single calendar year. Rather it is a year of study with a design and schedule set by each congregation observing it. It is also being encouraged by Western District Conference, which plans to kick off its Year of the Bible at its annual assembly Aug. 1-2 in North Newton, Kan.

The invitation to memorize Scripture for Lent, writes Tonya Ramer Wenger, pastor at First Mennonite Church, in the congregation's newsletter, "is really more about encouraging your growing in God than it is to present Scripture flawlessly in worship."

For more ideas, go to the website www.yearofthebiblenetwork.org. —*Gordon Houser*

## Community Mennonite Church becomes a welcoming congregation

HARRISONBURG, Va.—After a three-year process of discussion and discernment, Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg adopted a statement in January to "invite all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, to a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ and to consider membership with CMC."

The church is one of the largest Mennonite congregations in Harrisonburg, with an average Sunday attendance of around 275.

About 90 percent of church members voted to approve the statement, which also reads: "Most members of our congregation are open to applying Christian ethics regarding celibacy and fidelity to single persons and couples, regardless of sexual orientation." —*Andrew Jenner*

## Chile hosts Southern Cone Anabaptists

ANGOSTURA DE PAINE, Chile—After a two-year delay caused by the massive earthquake of 2010, the traditional biannual gathering of the Mennonites of the Southern Cone took place in Chile for the first time, where about 20 congregations stated their support of Anabaptism. The gathering was Jan. 23-27 in Angostura de Paine.

About 100 Anabaptists from Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil arrived there, plus dozens of members of other churches from several regions of Chile. They were joined by visitors from Central and North America and by the Officers of Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

The Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile, which became the 100th MWC member church in 2011, organized the event. With a dozen congregations throughout the country, the IEMCH reflects the missionary vocation of the Latin American Anabaptist churches. —*MWC*

# Jake King, Mennonite detective

**Ron Adams** is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

Some years ago, I wrote a story about a Mennonite detective named Jake King. Jake speaks in that sardonic, world-weary voice made famous by Spade and Marlowe. Like his fictional predecessors, Jake gets bowled over by every Beautiful Woman who comes to him for help. And he is reminded that women can get along fine without him.

So far, Jake has paid a long overdue visit to his mother, initiated by a dark-haired woman and a cassette recording of 606*. He's recovered a clown's stolen voice and sung a lullaby for a little boy with big feet. And, most recently, he helped a certain rich young ruler decide to do what it takes to follow Jesus.

This is the kind of thing pastors get up to when not writing sermons: not creating stories about a pacifist detective of little brain and large heart. Rather, wishing and praying that something good will happen at the end of every story. We pastors want to make things come out right.

One of the gifts of pastoral ministry comes when members of our community invite us into their stories. The invitation usually comes during a specific chapter in those stories, a specific set of circumstances that call for pastoral care.

It is a pastor's privilege to walk alongside sisters and brothers as they negotiate a transition, mourn a loss or celebrate something unexpected and wonderful. We do premarital counseling. We try to offer support when marriages fail. We laugh with new parents. We cry with those who've lost someone dear. We stand by hospital beds and pray. We bear witness to the movement of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others.

**While it may seem that pastors** are the ones offering ourselves—that we are the givers—the truth is the other way around. When people invite us into their stories, into the deeper places of their lives, we receive a gift both precious and profound. As we get caught up in their stories, we begin to see our sisters and brothers more fully, more honestly, even more lovingly. Such a gift!

I cannot speak for all pastors. But I have a powerful desire for happy endings. I want those who come to me with a hope or a dream or a need to find something good at the end of their story. I want broken hearts to find solace. I want broken relationships to find healing. I want sick bodies to recover. I want loving couples to live well together all their days. I want babies to grow strong and wise and beautiful and become exactly what God intends them to be. I want to solve every mystery and rescue everyone in distress. I want a happy ending.

> If being invited into the stories of others is the gift of pastoral ministry, discovering that it is not in my power to right every wrong and fix every problem is its heartache.

**I know I am not God.** I know I cannot make things always turn out right. Not for myself. And certainly not for other people. If being invited into the stories of others is the gift of pastoral ministry, discovering that it is not in my power to right every wrong and fix every problem is its heartache.

Which may be why I invented Jake King, Mennonite detective. By the end of the story the mystery is solved. But our hero is not unscathed. More often than not, the real mystery being solved is in his own heart. And the solution? A deeper awareness of his inability to make all things right. Because even Jake King, Mennonite detective, must reckon with his limitations. He may sometimes make things better. But he cannot always make them right. Jake helps me explore the distance between what I wish I could do and what I can do.

It's not just pastors and fictional detectives who struggle with the distance between their desire for a happy ending, and their capacity to bring it about. Sooner or later, we all learn that we cannot make everything come out right, no matter how hard we try.

But we need not despair. Because the Author of our stories is still writing. And though we may struggle now, we do not lose heart. For God has promised a happy ending. And God can make it so. TM

*In *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969), this is the song number for the hymn, "Praise God From Whom," also known informally as the Mennonite anthem.

# The global church in our own backyard

In his landmark book *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Orbis, 2008), Jehu Hanciles challenges standard assumptions regarding "globalization." Although it may appear as if Western religious, economic, political and cultural forces have come to dominate the world, the reality is actually much more complicated.

Not only do local cultures frequently reframe Western influences to suit their own purposes, but the massive migrations of people from South to North during the past few decades—and the dynamic communities they have formed—are gradually reshaping the culture of Europe and North America. The recent rise to political prominence of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States is only one visible expression of this dynamic. In reality, vibrant immigrant communities from many cultures have taken root in cities throughout the United States, and a growing number of churches in the global South are now sending missionaries to plant new congregations in Europe and North America. Conrad Kanagy's book *Road Signs for the Journey* (Herald Press, 2007) notes that the fastest-growing groups in Mennonite Church USA today are the so-called "Racial/Ethnic" congregations, many of them dominated by first- or second-generation immigrants. This transformation may seem unsettling to some, but it also suggests an expression of Anabaptist renewal in North America that bears the promise of new life and vitality.

**In January, I received an email** from a student at Fuller Theological Seminary who signed his name Pablo Kim Sun. I immediately assumed that Pablo was a Korean student who had, with good humor, adopted a local Spanish name because his own first name was too difficult for students and professors to pronounce. Several weeks later, as our friendship deepened, I realized his story was much more complicated—and much more interesting—than my initial assumption.

Hyung Jin (Paul) Kim Sun was born in Asunción, Paraguay, the son of Korean immigrants. His parents, of mixed Catholic and Presbyterian background, had immigrated to Paraguay in the late 1970s, seeking their economic fortune. Hyung Jin grew up speaking Korean at home and Spanish with his Paraguayan friends. But he also learned English at the private Christian school he attended, where he adopted the name Paul.

Paul had encountered German-speaking Mennonites in Asunción through his parent's wholesale grocery business. But it was not until he discovered Anabaptist history and theology while studying at Fuller—an evangelical school in Pasadena, Calif.—that he realized what Mennonites believed. By then he had become a convinced Anabaptist, committed to the principles of biblical peacemaking, daily discipleship and a life in community. His journey embodies a new, culturally diverse form of Mennonite identity that is bringing the global church to our own doorstep.

**Giving expression to this** multicultural religious identity is never simple. In the United States, Paul opted to identify himself with the Spanish Pablo as a reminder of his Paraguayan identity. And even though he quickly joined the local Korean Mennonite church, he resists rigid cultural categories. "I am more than just a Korean Mennonite," he insists. "I'm a Korean-Paraguayan Mennonite. … I read my Bible in English, pray in Korean and tend to share the gospel in Spanish."

Meanwhile, the impact of the Korean Mennonite witness in southern California continues to grow. In 2010, Korean Mennonite pastors in the United States and Canada formed the Korean Anabaptist Fellowship, an organization "committed to living out the Anabaptist confession in a Korean context." More recently, Hyun Hur, a Korean Mennonite pastor, helped create ReconciliAsian, a peace center in Los Angeles that seeks to promote Anabaptist values in the Korean immigrant community (see February issue, page 38). "The goal of the center," he writes, "is to encourage a peace culture in the immigrant churches and provide skills that can promote conversation, participation and cooperation." In the meantime, Pablo Kim Sun is completing an M.Div. in Christian ethics and was recently licensed by the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference to serve as the lead pastor of Church for Others, a Korean Mennonite congregation in Temple City, Calif.

The exact form of the Korean Anabaptist-Mennonite witness in North America is still emerging. But as a new generation of committed theologians, ethicists, peacemakers and church planters emerge, the identity of the broader Mennonite church in North America will inevitably be stretched and transformed.

Can we be open and attentive to the presence of the global church in our own backyard?

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Vibrant immigrant communities from many cultures have taken root in cities throughout the United States.

# How much military spending is enough?

As discussions continue about the federal budget and how to reduce spending, we hear little about the so-called defense budget. And if we do, some congressional leader often bemoans even considering cuts in the military.

Mennonites have a long history of speaking (and acting) out against military spending, both on moral grounds and on its inefficient, inflationary nature. But other voices have always been there as well.

In "The Force" (*The New Yorker*, Jan. 28), Jill Lepore asks, How much military is enough? She reports on the House Armed Services Committee, whose chair, Howard P. McKeon (R-Calif.), though he has never served in the military, "believes that it's his job to protect the Pentagon from budget cuts."

Lepore points out that "the United States spends more on defense than all the other nations of the world combined" and that "between 1998 and 2011, military spending doubled, reaching more than $700 billion a year."

She then reviews the history of U.S. military spending. "Early Americans," she writes, "considered a standing army—a permanent army kept even in times of peace—to be a form of tyranny." And in fact, the United States did not establish a standing army until World War II. And the Armed Services Committee was formed in 1946.

With the onset of the Cold War, military spending ballooned, and in the 1950s it "made up close to three-quarters of the federal budget." Much of that increase was also pushed by military contractors, such as Lockheed Martin, who "argued not only for military expansion but also for federal subsidies."

At a hearing on the future of the military on Sept. 8, 2011, John Garamendi (D-Calif.) read aloud from a speech by President Eisenhower from 1953 in which he said, "This world in arms … is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. … This is not a way of life at all in any true sense."

Eisenhower, Lepore notes, was "the son of pacifist Mennonites who considered war a sin." In his farewell address in 1961, he said "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

"If any arms manufacturer today holds what Eisenhower called 'unwarranted influence,' it is Lockheed Martin," writes Lepore. Its contracts with the Pentagon amount to about "$30 billion each year, it "spends $15 million a year on lobbying efforts and campaign contributions."

Lepore quotes from soldier-critics who oppose the endless warmaking and excessive military spending that has occurred in the past decade. The most persuasive of these, she writes, is Andrew J. Bacevich, a career Army officer and now a professor of history and international relations at Boston University.

Bacevich argues that Americans "have fallen prey to militarism," which "defines the nation's strength and well-being in terms of military preparedness, military action and the fostering of (or nostalgia for) military ideals."

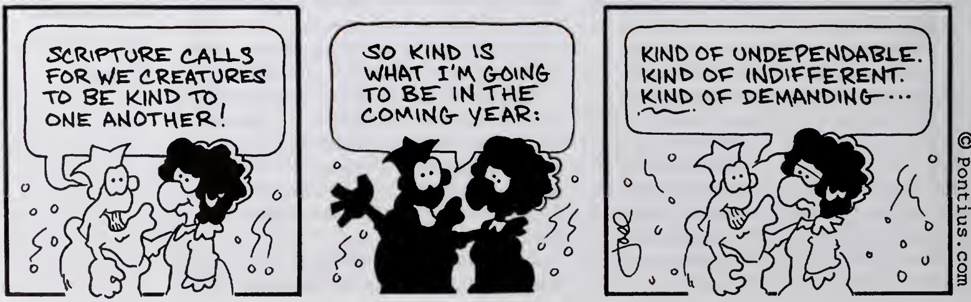
He blames much of this on intellectuals, both conservative and liberal. "The resort to force," Lepore writes, "is a product of political failure" and a failure of political culture.

She notes that Bacevich has lost patience with "CNN loudmouths, neocon opinion-page columnists, retired generals who run for office, Hollywood action-film directors, Jerry Falwell, Wesley Clark, Tom Clancy, Bill Clinton." Bacevich, she writes, "deplores their ego-driven mythmaking, their love of glory, their indifference to brutality."

As Bacevich notes, militarism is like an illness that romanticizes what is barbarous. Our government needs a dose of sanity as it considers the exorbitant amount being spent to feed this illness.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


SCRIPTURE CALLS FOR WE CREATURES TO BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER!
SO KIND IS WHAT I'M GOING TO BE IN THE COMING YEAR:
KIND OF UNDEPENDABLE. KIND OF INDIFFERENT. KIND OF DEMANDING…

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> “The ego gets what it wants with words. The soul finds what it needs in silence.”—Richard Rohr, in “Finding God in the Depths of Silence” in *Sojourners*

## Fiction without faith?

Writer Paul Elie writes in the Dec. 19, 2012, issue of the *New York Times* that if there is any portion of our culture that is truly post-Christian, it is literature. There are no fiction writers today like Flannery O’Connor, Walker Percy, Reynolds Price or John Updike, who took faith seriously and gave it explanatory power. Faith in fiction is now largely treated as an artifact of the past. Even Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead*, which portrays “the most emphatically Christian character in contemporary American fiction”—the Rev. John Ames—is historical fiction, set in the past. “Belief as upbringing, belief as social fact, belief as a species of American weirdness: our literary fiction has all these things,” writes Elie. “All that is missing is the believer.”—*Christian Century*

## A tonic for peace

Education of women is almost like a tonic for peace, health and prosperity in developing countries, according to War Child founder Samantha Nutt in her book Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies and Aid. One immediate educational dividend is reduced child mortality. Citing a study of demographic data from 1970 to 2009, she asserts that “for every additional year of education women of reproductive age in developing countries obtained, the death rate among children under 5 dropped by 10 percent.” Another dividend is a reduction in the cycle of violence and despair that she insists will not end “so long as women remain marginalized by illiteracy and are catastrophically poor. … The most affordable, efficient and transformational way to prevent conflict and human suffering does not lie in swelling military aid and raising defense budgets. It lies in ensuring that women and girls have choices other than subservience and reproductive surrender.”—*The Marketplace*

**25%**
Journalists of color have lost one out of four jobs in the industry’s extensive layoffs.—*Columbia Journalism Review*

## The isolation of British Muslims

The increasing isolation of Britain’s Muslim community is leading to stepped-up attacks against Muslims and a sense that Muslims can act like “idiots” against outsiders in some parts of the city, British government and Muslim leaders say. Parts of London’s East End have turned into Muslims-only zones, they say, where gays and lesbians are harassed, men are forced to pour alcoholic drinks down the gutter and women have been ordered to cover their bare skin.—*Religion News Service*

## Poverty ignored by media

- Number of people living in poverty in the United States: **46 million**
- Percent of campaign coverage in major news outlets that dealt substantively with poverty during the first six months of 2012: **0.2**
- Number of substantive campaign stories on poverty aired or published in that period by ABC World News, NBC Nightly News, NPR’s All Things Considered and *Newsweek*: **0**

—*Columbia Journalism Review*

## Open doors

The Occupy Wall Street movement initially got the cold shoulder from some churches, but attitudes changed in New York City after Hurricane Sandy. Members of Occupy organized a relief effort called Occupy Sandy, and churches in Brooklyn, Staten Island and Coney Island opened their doors as organizing hubs and supply centers. Occupiers won the trust of locals by helping clean up damaged churches and serving people passed over by state-sponsored efforts. And they cleared pews of supplies before worship services so that the sanctuaries could be used by their congregations. Even before Sandy, the Occupy movement was reaching out to faith groups with a program called Rolling Jubilee, an effort to buy up defaulted debts for pennies on the dollar and then liquidate the debts.—*Christian Century*

Amount spent in 2011 on cosmetic procedures in the United States:
**$10 billion**
—*Yes! Magazine*

**80%**
of unmarried U.S. evangelicals between the ages of 18 and 29 have had sex.

**32%**
of all unplanned pregnancies had by evangelicals end in abortion.

**30%**
of evangelicals report getting pregnant or getting their partner pregnant. These rates are similar to those of unmarried young adults nationwide.
—*Insight*, National Association of Evangelicals newsletter

# Pioneer pastor

**Marilyn Miller's fulfilled pastoral longing empowers other women pioneers.**

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

When Marilyn Miller—one of the first women to be ordained in the Mennonite church—heard pleas in her childhood congregation in the 1940s for men to seek the pastorate, she asked God why she hadn't been created a male so she could answer that call.

Decades later, that longing led her into seminary and the pastorate—a place once reserved for men—and her example lit the path for other female trailblazers. Because they were faithful to the call, it's unlikely girls today pray like the 10-year-old Miller, listening for God beneath a silent prairie sky.

Marilyn Miller preaches at Boulder (Colo.) Mennonite Church.
Photo provided

"A speaker at Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church encouraged the congregation—because of a shortage of pastors in the former Mennonite Church (MC)—to pray that God would open more young men's hearts for the ministry," said 76-year-old Miller during a Jan. 20 interview at her home in Boulder, Colo., where she lives with Maurice, her husband.

"After that service, I went into our backyard and looked up at the sky and said, 'God, if you needed pastors so bad, why didn't you make me a man?' … I loved reading the Bible and would often preach to the chickens after my siblings got tired of me preaching to them."

She would preach, study the Bible, counsel and pray for others—all without pay—if God would just give her the opportunity. When she dated Maurice at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., she asked him if he was interested in being a pastor or a missionary, because that would allow her to be in ministry, too.

"He said he felt called to be neither, and if that was what I wanted, I would have to marry another man." In the end, they got married, and it has been a good and complimentary fit, she said. "Maurice has a gentle strength and has been encouraging and supportive of my ministry."

After they married in 1958, she finished her bachelor's degree in elementary education and he received a bachelor's and master's degree in city planning. It was more than a decade later—after several elementary teaching jobs, giving birth to four children and a move from Wichita, Kan., to Colorado—that her desire fully flowered.

In 1976, after she earned a Master of Divinity degree at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Western District Conference (WDC) ordained her as co-pastor to serve with the late Peter Ediger at Arvada (Colo.) Mennonite Church. She served there nine years part-time before she was called as WDC's first female church planter to start Boulder (Colo.) Mennonite Church, where she pastored for five years.

She left congregational ministry for a churchwide focus in 1989. She served with the former Commission on Home Ministries, a ministry of the former General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) that included work in evangelism, church planting and peace. After 12 years in that role, Miller, who holds a Doctor of Ministry degree, served as associate conference minister for WDC congregations in Colorado. In 2004, she retired from formal ministry.

"I stayed home with our small children for nine years," she said. "But when our youngest was getting preschool age, I felt restless. … I was active at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church [in Wichita] in such things as a neighborhood after school Bible program and a women's prayer group, but I felt there was something more."

Marilyn said she asked Walt Friesen what she needed to do to teach religion, and he said, "Go to seminary." The closest seminary at that time was in Denver, and she knew there was no way. "One morning," she said, "I knelt by my bed and told God that when all the children were in school I wanted to do something else besides homemaking. … I said I would do anything and go anywhere if God would just lead me. … I sensed God said, Don't worry, just keep doing what you are doing, and when I want you somewhere else, you will know it."

I loved reading the Bible and would often preach to the chickens after my siblings got tired of me preaching to them.—Marilyn Miller

Marilyn Miller baptizes Steve Voran in a Boulder stream, with Gretchen Williams holding towel, in August 1989. Photo provided

That very evening, Maurice said he'd just been asked to move to Denver to open a new consulting, planning office. It was painful to uproot their lives in 1972 from Kansas, where both sets of parents lived, but they felt God moving them west.

### Seal of exclusivity loosens

Three years later, she became the first GC woman to be ordained in current memory. The ordination of Ann Jemima Allebach in 1911 predated the journeys of Miller and Emma Richards. Six decades earlier, Allebach's ordination at First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia never received the support of Eastern District Conference. And she never pastored a Mennonite congregation. Richards was the first woman in the former Mennonite Church (MC) to be ordained, in 1973 by Illinois Mennonite Conference.

After Miller and Richards pushed through once-barred entries, the door for women opened wider—though still only a "crack" in many quarters. But enough "firsts" ensued by the mid-1980s that the tight seal of exclusivity was loosened. According to the Mennonite Church Yearbook, by 1987, the GCs had licensed or ordained 66 women as pastors. By 1988, the MCs had done the same for 62 women.

I told my mother that for someone who didn't believe in females preaching, she did a great job. —Marilyn Miller

"I was really surprised when I actually got a job as a pastor in a congregation," Miller said. "I told my professors at Iliff that the only thing Mennonite women are paid to do in churches is secretarial or janitorial work and that I didn't expect to get a job … but had come to seminary because I was so hungry to learn."

She attributed the answer to prayers for a pastorate to the deep openness and affirmation of WDC. "WDC and congregations like Arvada—[which] employed me as their first female pastor—believed that equality and inclusiveness were important in an era when many other regions and congregations did not," she said.

Miller suffered with pastorate-ready women who found no pastorates. She remembers how at one meeting a man described female pastors as wolves in sheep's clothing. Theological disagreement sometimes came from family, as was the case with her mother, the late Clara (Fricke) Kauffman.

"At the sharing time before my ordination, Mother stood and held up her Bible and said, 'Marilyn has my blessing, but I still believe that a woman's role is to be a helpmate for her husband.' I told her that for someone who didn't believe in females preaching, she did a great job."

But Miller still felt loved by her and was grateful that they gave each other freedom to be who God called them to be. Her father [the late Milo Kauffman] was a different story. "When someone asked him if he heard that a woman was going to

Marilyn Miller (to her mother's right) with her parents and siblings in 1954. Photo provided

Marilyn Miller as a child in 1938. Photo provided

Miller's family in Costa Rica in 1994. Photo provided

preach at a Mennonite college graduation, he said, 'Yes, I know—she's my daughter. … Like Peter in the Bible, who am I to fight against the Spirit?' "

Miller rejoices that the door of opportunity has been flung wide open in many sectors of Mennonite Church USA. Women today are not only lead pastors but seminary presidents and churchwide ministry leaders. Several of the many women who joined Miller and Richards in paving the way into this new world were Patty Shelly, Lois Barrett and Dorothy Nickel Friesen, all ordained in 1985.

"The news about Marilyn was affirming in light of my being advised not to go to seminary," says Friesen, a retired pastor, assistant dean at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and WDC conference minister. "The message was, After all, what are you going to do with a Master of Divinity degree, since women do not get jobs as pastors?

"In those days, at every turn, we were studying and discussing the role of women in leadership and the image of God. … We realized we had missed part of the gospel by silencing women. … Theologically, biblically and practically we needed a new vision.

"Yet we can't suggest all the men were the problem and all the women were the answer. … Strong male leadership also paved the way. … We need to strive for a collaborative and inclusive gender community."

John Esau, former GC director of ministerial leadership from 1985 through 1999, says the inclusion of women in pastoral ministry was well under way by the time he took the job. This new reality resonated with his longtime views that women brought many gifts to ministry.

"Women have moved the church from the domination of male leadership; they have also brought valuable new perceptions of substance and style," he says. "Despite the resistance from biblical literalists and the habits of tradition, the church has responded positively. … We have all been enriched by the perspective that women bring to ministry."

### Valuing models, balancing life

Miller's joyful perseverance seems linked to the values of love of God, community and service imparted to her as the eldest daughter of 10 children born to the Kauffmans. Her father served as president of Hesston (Kan.) College for 19 years and as a pastor and conference minister in South Central Conference. Her mother felt strongly about being keeper of hearth and home and gave undivided attention to her children.

> My mother's unconditional love for all her kids taught me about the importance of loving and including all others and striving to make that happen in whatever place of the church I am called to be.—Marilyn Miller

Miller imbibed the modeling of both parents and has sought a healthy—though often elusive—balance between her Mary and Martha, her being and doing, sides.

"My father gave his whole self to the church, and my mother gave herself totally to the family, and so I grew up knowing it was important to be wholehearted in whatever you did," she said. "I've struggled all my life with wanting to be a great homemaker and give to those close to me, like my mother, and a church worker and give to the world, like my father.

"At different seasons of my life, I've moved closer to one end of the continuum than the other, and I have some regrets about not always achieving a healthy balance. But I've learned what is most important is to be who I really am and not what others want me to be."

Though she's gained much on her pilgrimage, she's learned that it is her losses—in both her

On Sept. 28, 1975, Elbert Koontz preached at Miller's commissioning service at Arvada Mennonite Church and presented her with a "License to Preach the Gospel." Photo provided

family of origin and her own family—that have shaped her ministry with compassion, empathy and a desire to be real about death. Her older brother died of a brain tumor his last year of medical school. Her baby brother, with Down's Syndrome, died just before he turned 2.

"When my mother wanted to bring him up for dedication, she was told she could not bring a blemished lamb to the altar," Miller said. "But as all the little 'normal' kids were blessed, my mother's tears fell on my brother's face and he looked up at her and smiled.

> I used to read so many books on how to show care, but what it comes down to in the end for me is just listening to others and accepting their life stories, including the parts I don't get.
> —Marilyn Miller

"My mother's unconditional love for all her kids, whether it was my physician brother or this special needs son, taught me about the importance of loving and including all others and striving to make that happen in whatever place of the church I am called to be."

Miller had a miscarriage and delivered a stillborn child before she gave birth to her other three children—Michael, Michelle and Monica. On Mother's Day 1996, she lost 32-year-old Michael in a kayaking tragedy.

"About 7 p.m. on that Mother's Day, the phone rang, and I thought Michael was calling to wish me a happy Mother's Day," she said. "Instead, it was the sheriff, telling me that our son had been in a kayaking accident on the Animas River near Durango, and his body had not been found. ... That was one of the worst moments of my life. I suddenly knew what people meant when they talked about a broken heart.

"There is anger in loss and death. ... We quell this powerful emotion by saying, 'They are in a better place, and God knows best.' Instead, we need to help each other lament as they did in the Old Testament. ... When we are open to lament, we also open ourselves to the praise that comes from an honest release."

Sharing an unvarnished and beloved self with other unvarnished and beloved creatures of God is the heartbeat of Miller today. Hers is not a "retirement" but a resting in the joy of living a less structured life that still includes much lay ministry. She has more time to enjoy and nurture her children and five grandchildren and revel in nature with Maurice, who spent 21 years working for The U.S. National Park Service. She also expresses her love of cooking and healthy food in a homeless ministry at Boulder Mennonite.

Her elusive balance has found a centered rhythm. Miller is grateful God brought her through the pioneering and pain to a homestead of the heart that still searches the sky for the next calling of love.

"The older I get, the more I realize that life is simpler than we make it," she said. "We don't need to fix others or ourselves. ... I used to read so many books on how to show care, but what it comes down to in the end for me is just listening to others and accepting their life stories, including the parts I don't get.

"When we truly love others, we can disagree and remain present to each other in grace. Real love allows you to speak your truth and me to speak mine, and we both are respected. I may be right about some things, and you may be right about others. The goal is to learn from each other and grow in love and truth. "

*Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of* Forever Family.

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Laurie Neumann Nafziger** is president and CEO for Oaklawn Psychiatric Center in Goshen, Ind., a community mental health center and psychiatric hospital that serves Indiana's Elkhart and St. Joseph counties. Oaklawn now has more than 700 employees, serves 14,500 clients and has a budget of $50 million. Nafziger lives in Goshen. She is a member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen and serves on the board of Mennonite Health Services Alliance, which sponsors Oaklawn.

I've been surrounded by smart, committed women—and men—who have a heart for people with mental illness and addictions.
—Laurie Neumann Nafziger

**Did you have a woman leader as mentor?**

I "grew up" professionally at Oaklawn, having worked there over 25 years. In that time, I received encouragement and support to stretch and take on new duties through existing male leaders—Hal Loewen and Sandy Kauffman. In both cases, they recognized my gifts and didn't seem concerned about my gender, for which I'm grateful.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**

The behavioral health-care field is predominantly female, and I've been surrounded by smart, committed women—and men—who have a heart for people with mental illness and addictions. I appreciate the opportunity to recognize other women's gifts and offer them opportunities to use them in a way that benefits others and is satisfying for them.

**How are their experiences the same or different from yours?**

As I watch my daughter and her friends enter the work force, it's wonderful to see their confidence and comfort. They've had the benefit of seeing their mothers function successfully at home and in the workplace, so this is normal for them in a way that was different from my experience.

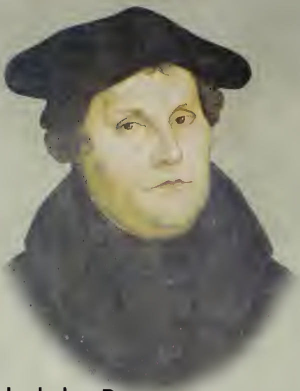
**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**

In the beginning, I was aware of two impediments: I was young and I was female. That felt like a tough combination sometimes. However, I focused on doing my job well and stepping up to opportunities. By now, the age thing has taken care of itself, and the world is more accepting of women.

**When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?**

I am encouraged by my family, my friends and the work itself. I'm a high-energy and positive person and never stay down long. I am energized by the work and the wonderful people around me. They bring support and a safe place to vent, which gives me what I need to move ahead.

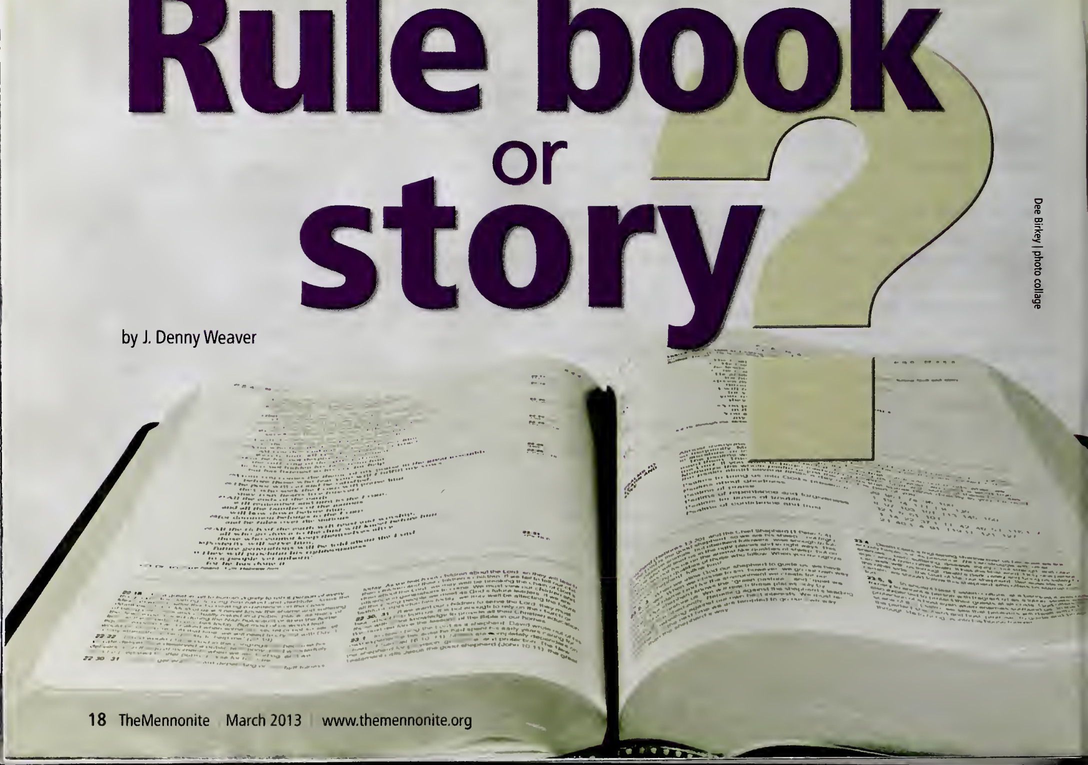
**The difference it makes in how we approach the Bible**



As a counterpoint to papal authority, Martin Luther appealed to "sola scriptura" or "Scripture alone" as the source of authority for reformation. This appeal worked well. Reformers of many stripes, including Anabaptists, based reform on the authority of Scripture. This approach that enabled the Protestant Reformation in the 16th-century contained the seeds of a problem that persists today, nearly six centuries later. ▶

# Rule book or story?

by J. Denny Weaver



Dee Birkey | photo collage

However, these reformers did not recognize that they were reading and using the Bible differently. Appeals to the Bible did not resolve their differences. We still encounter this problem, whether within the Mennonite family or between Mennonites and other Christians.

**The appeal to the Bible** as a direct source of authority assumes that it functions like a divine rule book. The assumption is that its words jump over 20 or even 30 centuries to give instructions in timeless fashion directly to us for today. Those who truly believe the Bible, it is claimed, will follow these examples and commandments. This approach works well when we are comfortable with the rules discovered.

But what happens when other examples and commandments are unthinkable or seem completely outmoded today. If we followed the example of the patriarchs and the kings of Israel, men would have multiple wives. God commanded the Israelites to massacre enemies. There are instructions to stone to death a rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), to execute adulterers (Deuteronomy 22:22-24), to stone to death a wife, brother, son or daughter who tempts one to worship other gods (Deuteronomy 13:6-10). We are not to mix types of cloth or plant a second crop in a vineyard (Deuteronomy 23:9, 11), and must never eat pork or shell fish (Deuteronomy 14:3-21). Women may not wear men's clothing such as pants (Deuteronomy 22:5) or cut their hair and are required to wear a prayer veiling (1 Corinthians 11). Jewelry of any kind is forbidden (1 Peter 3:4). Men must have beards, since trimming the edges is not allowed (Leviticus 19:27). Divorce is forbidden (Mark 10:6-12). And more. Mostly we have rested uneasy with some of these commands and ignored others.

Our uneasiness stems in part from the assumption that we should read the Bible as a book of transcendent rules and belief statements, existing above history and directly applicable today. I suggest that we allow the character of the Bible itself to show us how to read it.

The unity of the Bible is provided by a narrative, the story of God's people that begins with Abraham and runs through the history of Israel to Jesus and the early church. We read this long-running saga in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. Close up vignettes appear in Ruth, Esther and parts of Daniel. The books of the prophets present commentary on events all along this history. The Book of Psalms presents the worship music of God's people, Proverbs reviews some of their wisdom. Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain early law codes. In the New Testament, the story continues in the four Gospels and Acts. The Epistles provide commentary on the story for the early church. Apocalyptic writings in Daniel and Revelation present a view of events happening in the world from the perspective of the heavenly throne room. This description of the Bible's books could be greatly expanded, but the important point here is to see that it is the narrative of God's people that reveals how the various books relate to each other and thus unifies the collection of writings that we call the Bible.

**How is it helpful** to see the story of God's people as the unifying factor of the Bible? First, this understanding makes this history our history. We, the church today, are the continuation of the story of God's people. The story that began with Abraham and goes through Jesus and the early church is the beginning of our identity as God's people. This reading displays the entire Bible, not just the New Testament, as our book.

Jesus' story becomes the key to identifying the earlier voices in the story that most truly reflect the will of God.

Second, recognizing this story as the unifying element of the Bible should impact the way we understand it. Seeing this story means we should expect to see developments and changes in the story as the people of God grew in their understanding of what it meant to be God's people. We should expect to see instances where people got things wrong, without thereby seeing that recognition as a rejection of the truth of the Bible. Stated boldly, we should get used to the idea that not all writings in the Bible speak with the same voice, and we can see that some ideas in it are wrong or misguided and can be abandoned. Thus the most important point of all is to see the direction of changes as the writers grew in their understanding of God. And since the important culmination of the story is in the narrative of Jesus, his story becomes the key to identifying the earlier voices in the story that most truly reflect the will of God.

Third, seeing the unifying factor of the Bible as the story of God's people enables us to see that everything in the Bible reflects the particular context in which they lived. Obviously we live in a different context. Our task is not to try to copy and transplant directly the ideas and practices from 2,000 or 3,000 years ago. Rather than assuming the history speaks directly to us, we should read their story to understand the direction in which things were moving and changing.

Rather than assuming the history speaks directly to us, we should read their story to understand the direction in which things were moving and changing.

Then, in our context, we will discuss how to be the continuation of that story, how to keep moving the story in the same direction.

**The Bible makes changes** within this history visible. By the time of the New Testament, for example, there had been a movement away from the polygamy practiced by the patriarchs and the kings of Israel. In another shift, there is a clear move toward less violence, which culminates with Jesus' rejection of violence. Six times in the Book of Acts the writer describes the brief narrative used by the Apostles to identify Jesus in the months immediately after his death and resurrection (Acts 2:14-39; 3:13-26; 4:10-12; 5:30-32; 10:36-43; 13:17-41). Paul repeats that outline (1 Corinthians 15) but adds a point not made earlier, that the resurrection of Jesus requires belief in a general resurrection of the dead. Some decades later, as the eyewitnesses to Jesus died, the narrative outline visible in Acts was expanded by the four Gospel writers. Meanwhile, the church in Acts expanded the circle of God's people to include Gentiles, abandoned the requirement of circumcision and allowed eating of foods previously deemed unclean. New Testament interpreters took the story of Jesus into other worldviews and used the images from these diverse frames of reference to say that with his life, death and resurrection Jesus was both above and below it—the Greek Logos (John 1), principalities and powers (Colossians 1), the high priest (Hebrews), a new Adam (Philippians 2), the slain Lamb (Revelation 4 and 5).

These developments and changes all involved decisions about how to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively in new contexts and to address new issues as the early church expanded beyond Jerusalem. Sometimes they extracted new insight from the story. Other times they changed their minds about acceptable conduct.

With changes occurring, it should be obvious that different viewpoints appear, and thus contemporary interpreters are not obligated to, and in fact cannot, harmonize or synthesize all biblical statements on a particular question. It is not possible, for example, to harmonize the blessing of marriage to multiple wives with a clear endorsement of monogamous marriage, or decisions for and against circumcision or slavery.

In practice, we have been applying this understanding of the Bible but without fully acknowl-

Many good books address biblical interpretation. Here are two recent ones: **Out of Context: How to Avoid Misinterpreting the Bible** by Richard L. Schultz (BakerBooks, 2012, $13.99) is a relatively small book that uses contemporary examples of what Schultz calls "interpretive malpractice" to explain how biblical interpretation can go wrong. He then goes on to consider three central features of biblical texts: literary context, individual words and literary genres. He then discusses how to move from interpretation to application, why and how Christians misinterpret the Bible and why this needs to be corrected.

**All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible** by Dean B. Deppe (Eerdmans, 2011, $25) is a longer, more in-depth book but one that takes a different approach. Deppe is interested less in theory than in providing a hands-on approach to Bible study. He focuses on eight methods that Bible scholars use, from analyzing literary, grammatical and structural elements to investigating historical and cultural backgrounds to exploring the history of interpretation. With each method he looks at specific biblical texts and shows how that method works with those texts. Schultz's book is more of an overview and addressed to a general audience. Deppe's book is for those who want to dig into the Bible and learn to understand it better. The two complement each other and provide good resources for Christians.—*Gordon Houser* edging or owning it. Some changes have taken longer to develop than others. It was well into the 19th century before many Christians condemned slavery in the face of the Bible's apparent sanction of it. More recently, another example comes from the status of women in the church. Since early in the last century, in many denominations there has been significant movement toward acknowledging the equal status of women and recognizing that women can and should hold any office and perform any function within the church.

**Mennonites have experienced these changes.** The Mennonite congregation of my youth required head coverings for women, women did not wear pants, even wedding bands were forbidden, and divorce was an unpardonable sin. Ordaining women was not even thinkable. The church defended all these practices with figurative or often actual fingers placed on specific verses of Scripture. With a few exceptions and some bumps along the way, significant changes have occurred for all these issues in the last 50 to 75 years in what is now Mennonite Church USA. These developments have occurred without a sense of having abandoned the Bible as the book of the church. We should accept the fact that other long-held positions may also change as contexts and awareness shifts. For today, I believe the stance of refusing full church membership and participation to people in committed, same-sex relationships is another such long-held prohibition that needs to change.

What I am suggesting is for us to be more forthright about the way we are actually using the Bible. Even as the assumption persists that the Bible functions as a rule book, in practice we are already reading it as a history, whose context we assess as we ask how to continue the story today.

The Bible is the church's book because it contains the story of the church's origins. Without it, we would know little about the beginning of the first millennia of the story that began with Abraham. But the Bible is the church's book for another reason as well. We are called Christians. The Bible is by far the best source to the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. We read the Bible because it contains the story of the one who defines the primary identity of Christians, Jesus Christ. The words of the Bible are important, but they are not the primary authority. The ultimate authority for Christians is the narrative of Jesus that is witnessed to by the words of the Bible.

**With the story of Jesus in view** as the key to understanding the Bible, we need to emphasize that this is not a "picking and choosing" of preferred texts or discarding a part of the Bible. We are omitting nothing from the canon. In fact, we need the complete text. The contradictions and disagreements and unsavory elements of the story that led to Jesus point to the authenticity of the ancient text. No editor sanitized it. And only with this full, unexpurgated version in view do we see that there is an unfolding understanding that comes to fruition in the nonviolent story of Jesus.

The ultimate authority for Christians is the narrative of Jesus that is witnessed to by the words of the Bible.

In the first century, Paul was understanding and bringing Jesus into his context. We who stand in the tradition of Jesus and Paul are engaged in the same task, namely, reading the history in a way to continue today the task of bringing Jesus into our world as we continue the story of God's people. Performing this task is by no means a replacement of the biblical writings. Rather we are learning from them how changes were made in applying Jesus to their context, which then assists our efforts to bring Jesus into our world. As John Howard Yoder once wrote, we should be continually "reaching back" to the original story of Jesus to restate it anew in our current context.

Reaching back also means reaching out. Since all Christian traditions confess Jesus, reading the Bible with the story of Jesus as the norm of understanding the Bible's story establishes an ecumenical framework for conversation with all Christians.

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Consistent themes and big trajectories of God's Word guide us.

# A Shalom Arc of biblical interpretation

by J. Nelson Kraybill

It is not always easy for modern readers to understand what a biblical text meant for the original writer, or what the text should mean for us today. A chasm of time and culture separates modern America from ancient settings such as Sinai or Capernaum. The word of God that once instructed Hebrews not to wear clothes made of wool and linen woven together (Deuteronomy 22:11), for example, does not seem relevant to us.

Nevertheless, the church finds meaning in such passages because they are part of a *larger story* of God's self-revelation and the human response. The interpretative task of the church is to discern underlying themes and direction in this big narrative, then use what the Holy Spirit shows us to make practical application for our lives today.

Some ethical or covenant practices shift significantly within the biblical narrative—such as the change from polygamy to monogamy or the movement from animal sacrifice to forgiveness through cross and resurrection. But the biblical stance on a host of other practices remains constant: faithfulness to covenant, for example, or worship of one God. When ethical or spiritual teaching remains consistent throughout the entire biblical narrative, or when the New Testament gives unqualified new instruction, the church today must pay attention.

### Shalom Arc project

Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., where I serve on the pastoral team, is living into what we call a Shalom Arc project. We designed this two-year learning process in order to trace the trajectory of God's saving acts from Genesis to Revelation—and on into the streets of Elkhart.

We say that God is at work in our world to redeem, forgive and restore. Through story, conversation and the arts, Prairie Street Mennonite Church is tracing the biblical story of God's renewing activity in the world from Creation to New Creation, from Genesis to Revelation. We call the comprehensive salvation that God desires for the world 'shalom'—a biblical Hebrew word meaning peace, well-being and justice.

The purpose of the Shalom Arc Project is to increase our knowledge of and love for the Bible. Inspiration and instruction from the Big Story of Scripture inspire us to bold witness and service for God today. Along the way we are focusing on peak texts identified by members of the congregation—Bible passages that have made a particular impact on our lives. Some people are memorizing select Bible passages, others are exploring how the Bible relates to the visual arts or cinema or music. We are gaining new understanding of the biblical landscape, learning the sequence of major biblical events and observing how the Bible came into being. We want our lives and our congregation to be part of God's Big Story. "The arc of salvation history is long, and it bends toward God's shalom."

Experiencing the Bible as an unfolding narrative energizes us. No one in our congregation who struggles with the reality of violence or other real-life issues is looking to the Bible as a set of regulations or a divine rule book. We are looking for patterns of divine self-disclosure in history, for the flow of amazing grace, for waymarks that point to a time when God will make all things new (Revelation 21:5). We want to be part of that story, in relationship with our Creator. We commit to applying what we learn from the Shalom Arc not just to issues of violence but to many questions of how we live faithfully as children of God and participate in God's mission in the world.

> No one in our congregation who struggles with the reality of violence or other real-life issues is looking to the Bible as a set of regulations or a divine rule book.

### The Bible in relation to other sources

The Shalom Arc discernible in Scripture is the guiding framework for our reflection. With respect to violence, for example, the Book of Genesis explains that sin shattered the shalom of creation and promptly issued in murder (Genesis 4). Persistent violence then pervaded human experience. Prophets foresaw a time when the havoc would end (Micah 4), and Jesus announced the beginning of a kingdom whose members categorically reject violence (Matthew 5–7). In various matters of Bible interpretation we seek such a trajectory: what God *intended* from the beginning, how sin *warps* God's design, how God *redeems* and restores.

Central though the Bible is to our spiritual discernment, we do not use a "sola scriptura" model, at least if that means the Bible is the only place we look for insight. In talking about violence we also draw on various sources of authority. These include the experience of older people who resisted the military draft and the stories of Anabaptist martyrs. We read recent studies of the influence of handguns or violent video games. We take inspiration from the witness of Martin Luther King Jr. or Dorothy Day. We find rich understandings distilled in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

Jesus made no comments about handguns or mutual funds, but he said a lot about swords and money that is relevant to violence and economic justice in America.

**The meaning of sola scriptura**

When Protestant reformers spoke of sola scriptura, they did not intend to draw insight from the Bible *alone*; they meant that all other sources of authority remain subordinate to the Bible. The same Spirit who inspired the Bible still breathes through the church today. The Spirit will not contradict or countermand the trajectory of the biblical Shalom Arc that culminates in Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught that the "law and the prophets were in effect until John came, since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed." Jesus went on to insist that the whole of Scripture be maintained: not "one stroke of a letter in the law" could be dropped (Luke 16:16–17). After the resurrection, Jesus explains to disciples on their way to Emmaus how everything written about him in the law, the prophets and the Psalms finds fulfillment in his life, death and resurrection.

This trajectory of the biblical story means that the church needs the whole library from Genesis to Revelation to understand why the world is as it is and what God intends to do about it. For Christians, Jesus is the fulfillment and pinnacle of God's revelation. When there appears to be movement or tension within the Bible, we take our interpretive cues from Jesus.

Jesus made no comments about handguns or mutual funds, but he said a lot about swords and money that is relevant to violence and economic justice in America. Believers today must distill principles from Scripture and apply them in circumstances that biblical writers could not have imagined. Looking for underlying principles and trajectory means that Bible interpretation often is more complex than simply finding a verse and making it into a universal rule.

**Acts 15 suggests a model for interpretation**

There is an example in Acts 15 of believers making a major shift in practice when the early church began to receive Gentiles who did not observe traditional Jewish law including circumcision. The modern Western church, dealing with change in the surrounding culture in attitudes toward violence, sexuality and world religions, would do well to consider how early believers processed major change in the first century.

Here is an outline of stages of interpretation and decision-making that happened at Jerusalem according to Acts 15—with possible corresponding circumstances for the Mennonite church in North America today in italics.

1. There was disagreement about the innovation of receiving Gentiles into the church without requiring them to practice circumcision and otherwise adhere to the entire law of Moses (15:1). *There is debate in the North American Mennonite church about our historic commitment to nonviolence, to simple living and to traditional understandings of marriage.*

2. Leaders of the church at Jerusalem hosted an international and cross-cultural conference for discernment on how to proceed (15:4). *Denominational leaders organize discernment processes to receive insight and counsel from innovators and to hear from diverse ethnic groups or theological perspectives. This may include attention to how the global Mennonite church interprets a given matter.*

3. There was storytelling and cross-cultural field reports (15:4). *The church hears stories from individuals or church groups who have been open to a disputed innovation.*

4. Traditionalists cited precedent and wanted to receive Gentiles only if they practiced the entire law of Moses (15:5). *The church examines the established stance of Anabaptists through confessions of faith or other documents that reflect wide discernment.*

5. There was a lot of conversation and "much debate" (15:6). *The Mennonite church provides adequate forum for people of diverse perspectives to speak and be heard.*

6. Scripture came into play: "This agrees with the words of the prophets" (15:15). *The church considers how a proposed innovation aligns with either consistent principles or the clear trajectory of Scripture.*

7. A leader recognized by the church—James, the brother of Jesus—proposed a way forward:

"We should not trouble the Gentiles" with the entire burden of Mosaic law (15:19). *Congregational, conference and/or denomination-wide leaders articulate a way forward, in accountability to the rest of the church.*

8. Those who promoted change received endorsement but nevertheless needed to abide by underlying themes or trajectories of the law of Moses—including rejection of idols, rejection of fornication and rejection of "blood" (possibly a reference to murder; 15:20). *If the church opts for significant change, innovators will need to abide by underlying aspects of the traditional understanding that reflect the intent and direction of Scripture.*

9. The proposed way forward received approval by the whole church (15:22, 25). *Healthy change likely will not simply be top-down, bottom-up or local; it will receive wide discernment and ownership throughout the denomination. This requires yieldedness on the part of all to avoid creating a situation in which either innovators or traditionalists become so entrenched that they hold the entire church hostage.*

10. Leaders of the church at Jerusalem took care to have authorized representatives personally interpret new understandings to scattered congregations (15:25). *Significant change in practice may generate upheaval and may require relationship-tending and pastoral care as the church puts the new into practice.*

11. Despite all efforts to work through change peacefully, there may be lingering tensions (Galatians 2:11–14: after the seemingly peaceful agreement of Acts 15, Peter and Paul have a falling out over the issue of how to relate to Gentiles). *Major change on issues such as nonviolence or covenant boundaries will not be—and probably should not be—completely resolved in one generation.*

12. The whole process of biblical and ethical discernment in Acts 15 took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (15:28). *The church needs to discern both through discussion and through careful attention to the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 15 recounts a story of the church opting for substantial change. There are multiple cases in the New Testament when leaders did not embrace ethical or spiritual innovation—1 Corinthians 5:1–5 regarding sexual innovation, for example, or Jude 8–13 regarding greed and idolatry. In any case, it is significant that change described in Acts 15 came from circumstances of the church in mission. Similarly we should expect that today's church in mission sometimes will redefine or reconsider traditional understandings. When that happens, Mennonites would do well to consider the thoroughness and care with which major change happened in the early church and similarly draw from a breadth of processes and sources.

Individualism or congregationalism can blind us to our own limited understanding.

### Ballast on the ship

In every generation it is possible for the church to veer off course because of currents from surrounding culture or to lose momentum by failing to catch the wind of the Spirit. Forces of nationalism and xenophobia, for example, shift the church in North America toward idolatrous patriotism and militarism. Sometimes subgroups—such as academics, business people, clergy or a particular age cohort—attempt to resolve contested issues by talking among themselves without wider testing by the worshipping community. Individualism or congregationalism can blind us to our own limited understanding.

When navigating through substantial change in practice or conviction, the church is like a ship in rough waters that needs the ballast of tradition and accountability. Indispensable to plotting a course on God's Shalom Arc is deep knowledge of the Bible, interpreted communally by God's people in mission. All who help set the course need to pray without ceasing, hear from the wider church and rely on the empowering wind of the Holy Spirit.

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# Dreams of hope: the Lord reigns

by Cristina Rodriguez Blough

## A reflection on Psalm 24:1

*In elementary school, our teachers told us to "reach for the stars!" We got on our tippy toes and stretched to the sky with all our might 'Cuz what we heard was, "Reach for your dreams, You will always have that Right."*—excerpt from "Reaching for the Stars: a Journey," a poem by Sofia Campos

Sofia is a spirited graduate of UCLA and a young advocate for immigration reform and the passing of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act in the United States. Her poem evokes vivid images of courage, struggle and solidarity as it illustrates her journey as an "undocumented immigrant." The whispers of hope she heard from her teachers as a little girl impel her to speak up for equality for herself and for thousands of undocumented people in the United States.

Hateful attitudes against fellow humans present a moral, humanitarian and theological crisis.

Similarly, Daisy L. Machado—a dean and professor at Union Seminary in New York and the first U.S. Latina ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1981—and her sister received words of hope from their father, who arrived in the United States in 1956 with $7 in his pocket. "After telling us his wonderful bedtime stories, he would whisper in our ears that we could do anything, we could be anything, we could climb as high as the stars," she writes in *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins* (Orbis Books, 2001).

These two women's journeys inspire me and resonate with my experience as a Latina who has attended college and seminary in the United States. The process, from obtaining a student visa to recently receiving a residency card, has been complex, expensive and at times nerve-wracking. Before each of my visa appointments and interviews, my dad recited with conviction the words of Psalm 24:1: "De Jehová es la tierra y su plenitud; El mundo y los que en él habitan." ("The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.")

These words have had an immense impact on my life and remind me that God does not show partiality, that God reigns and takes care of his people. Creation and all who dwell in it belong to the Lord. This proclamation celebrates God's sovereignty over other deities and chaotic forces. Also, if the Earth and all people are the Lord's, this text carries profound theological insight into issues of immigration, human dignity and what it means to be a citizen of God's kingdom.

Michael Goulder writes in "David and Yahweh in Psalms 23 and 24" that Psalm 24 has been traditionally described as a "liturgical dialogue for a procession escorting the ark to the temple" (*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, June 1, 2006). Therefore, it is better understood in the context of a procession or communal gathering celebrating God's symbolic entrance to his holy mountain after defeating the "forces of chaos."

Psalm 24:2 says God founded the earth on the seas and established it on the rivers. Dianne Bergant writes in "'The Earth Is the Lord's': A Biblical Reflection on Psalm 24:1" (*Mission Studies* 15:2, 1998) that people of the Near Eastern world described the turbulent waters as destructive forces, that "unruly water was an apt symbol for chaos." Thus God's establishment of the earth over the water showed his power over chaos.

**Many undocumented families** and individuals have faced the turbulent waters of our time, forced to make the painful decision to leave their homes and livelihoods to escape violence, poverty, hunger, political and religious persecution, displacing forces of globalization and ecological degradation. These chaotic conditions are beyond people's ingenuity and control.

Several Hebrew words are used in Scripture to refer to people whose basic material needs are not being met. Bruce Malchow adds in *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What Is New and What Is Old?* (Liturgical Press, 1996) that these words "also apply to people without the means to protect themselves from oppression. They have become poor through injustice."

Many immigrants have been pushed to leave their lands, their power lessened through external forces. And once immigrants relocate, they continue to face systems of racial and economic exclusion in the "host" land. Living in the shadows can create great anxiety and involve painful choices for these families. Many choose to keep their citizen children from taking advantage of opportunities that would improve their well-being, fearing that applying for such programs could increase their risk of deportation and rip the family apart. Immigrant children are bullied at school by other kids who tell them "to go back to where you came from." Some parents without documents are afraid even to let their children play outside. Hateful attitudes against fellow humans present a moral, humanitarian and theological crisis.

**Let us remember** that Abraham himself was an "illegal alien," forced by famine to take up alien status in Egypt, where he feared for his life and lied, presenting his wife as his sister (Genesis 12:13). God tells Abraham, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for 400 years," alluding to the exodus (Genesis 15:12).

But God also speaks words of hope: "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be." This passage is talking about the people of God. The people who are to be a blessing to others are, according to Scripture, slaves and aliens.

Psalm 24:1-2 is a song of hope and trust for the sojourner, proclaiming God's kingship and final victory over chaos. God even reigns over the chaotic forces of our day that take the shape of dehumanizing systems of exclusion, predatory economic policies and misguided hateful ideologies. In *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Fortress Press, 1984), Walter Brueggemann identifies Psalm 24 as a "psalm of orientation," one that offers a "confident view that life is not troubled or threatened but is fundamentally settled because God is known to be trustworthy and reliable." Brueggemann writes that these types of Psalms are in many ways "expressions of creation faith."

This message of hope and trust is expanded wonderfully in Psalm 146:6-10.

God is the one who delivers the oppressed, feeds the hungry, watches over the most vulnerable and heals his people. Jesus' healings restored people to their communities socially and religiously. Therefore "our communities of faith should be about discipleship, not disfranchisement; communion, not exclusion," write Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell in *Our God Is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice* (Orbis Books, 2012).

**Let us also consider** Psalm 147:4, which declares that God the Creator determines the number of stars, giving each a name. In God's eyes, the undocumented do not remain unnamed, marginalized, dehumanized and invisible. God reigns, and he knows each of them—and their dreams to touch the stars—and calls them by name. Failing to recognize the immigrant's human dignity and plight is an affront to God's absolute sovereignty over borders, peoples and all creation.

Toward the end of her poem, Sofia Campos writes, "As we celebrate the days, let us not forget we have great purpose and great power; so a challenge for us: What kind of world do we choose to imagine?" This is an invitation to work for God's dream of inclusion and to keep dreaming the dreams of Martin Luther King Jr., Rigoberta Menchú, Desmund Tutu and Sofia Campos. It is also a call to expect enthusiastically the realization of the kingdom of God, which is already here and yet to come. As citizens of God's kingdom, we can remember our theological identity as immigrants, be a blessing to others and acknowledge the lordship of God over chaotic forces that claim power.

The message of hope of Psalm 24:1 will deliver a powerful prophetic message at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix this July. Declaring, "The Lord reigns" is both an invitation to in repentance abandon ideologies that fail to affirm "the other" as God's beloved and a herald of hope that impels us to keep dreaming and acting together toward the fulfillment of God's just kingdom.

Failing to recognize the immigrant's human dignity and plight is an affront to God's absolute sovereignty over borders, peoples and all creation.

*Cristina Rodriguez Blough was born and grew up in Quito, Ecuador, and is a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.*

**A reflection on 1 Samuel 1-2**

Perhaps you are like Hannah in the story at the beginning of 1 Samuel: someone living in despair, so sick with the troubles of life that you barely muster the strength to go on—and nobody knows it, except God, who seems to be silent despite your prayers. Nonetheless, somehow you end up at another worship service, waiting among God's people for God to respond to your cries. Like Hannah, you return to God's house only to experience again the pain of God's silence. Worship has become a wandering pilgrimage into the recesses of the darkness of God. You are Hannah: in a state of tormented patience, overwhelmed with prayers of anguish, longing for God's favor to flow like a waterfall, crashing over you, surrounding you, bathing you in a pool of love and grace. ▶

# The **wounds** of **love**

by Isaac S. Villegas

In the story, Hannah is so sick with despair that she cannot eat. From all appearances, God seems to have abandoned her a long time ago, yet she still goes up to the Temple in Jerusalem. Year after year, Hannah returns to the Temple to worship God, even though God answers her cries with silence. In the darkness of despair, the rituals of faith keep alive her life with God. Hannah goes on, with enduring patience, trusting in God's love even though she hasn't seen the evidence that would lead her to assume that God actually cares about her life. "O Lord Almighty," Hannah prays, "look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and [do] not forget me" (1 Samuel 1:11).

With each prayer, with each visit to the Temple, Hannah draws closer to God. She is drawn into the intimacy of silence where, as the Syrian monk Pseudo-Dionysius wrote in the sixth century, "the mysteries of God's Word lie simple, absolute and unchangeable in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence."

As she returns again and again to the silence, God cannot forget her. God gives her a son—a child as a gift, not a possession. Gifts from God are meant to be shared, so Hannah gives her child to the priest, surrendering Samuel to God's work for the people: "As long as he lives," she says, "he is given to the Lord" (v. 28).

**As waves of profound gratitude** and deep heartache wash over her, Hannah prays, "I delight in your deliverance" (2:1). As our Bibles share her prayer with us, we are invited into her delight in God's work of redemption. Hannah's prayer summons us to rejoice in the God who promises to change the distribution of power in the world: "Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more" (v. 4). Hannah, this one who knows God's love, describes God as the one who delivers the lowly from the forces that keep them on the underside of society. "God raises the poor from the dust," she declares, "and lifts the needy from the ash heap" (v. 8). As the Dominican preacher Herbert McCabe puts it, "We have to recognize that the only God we know is the God of the poor, the God who takes sides." That God takes sides is a great scandal of the biblical story. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt," God says to Israel, "out of the house of slavery" (Deuteronomy 5:6). The God revealed to us in the Bible is the God of the oppressed, the God who chooses the enslaved people of Israel "out of all the people on the earth," not Egypt (14:2). When it comes to oppression, God is not neutral. God doesn't straddle the fence.

According to Hannah's prayer, when God's love flows into the world, the central focus is the poor—the hungry and the lowly. Hannah speaks from personal experience, for God has looked with favor upon her, a humiliated member of her community. Being humble is not a virtue that Hannah chooses; her pursuit of humility has nothing to do with a desire to please God. Instead, she is humble because she is humiliated by her barrenness. She learns humility not as a result of her will but because she has been humiliated through no fault of her own. Yet, as she is overwhelmed with humiliation, Hannah discovers that God is moved by a profound love for the humiliated, for her—and not just for her but for all who are lowly: "God raises the poor from the dust," she prays, "and lifts the needy from the ash heap." She speaks of what she knows, a personal knowledge of God's love for the humbled, for the poor and hungry.

> Hannah's prayer summons us to rejoice in the God who promises to change the distribution of power in the world.

Hannah bears witness to what God's love looks like in our world. God's love flows like a waterfall: the river of God's eternal life gushes over the rocks at the very top, splashing God's presence everywhere as the water finally pools at the bottom. Like a waterfall, the love of God is indiscriminate, soaking everyone on the way down. Yet the direction matters: God's love is drawn to the low places; that's where God's presence forms pools of healing and grace. Baptism is an invitation into these waters, into the river of life, the life of God in the world. The Christian life involves getting caught up in this flow of grace as God's presence rushes through and around us, as we find ourselves with people like Hannah, who face their enemies alone because their friends and communities have abandoned them.

The good news according to the story of Hannah is that God does answer, although God seems to take longer than we think we can bear. In the meantime, we pray with Hannah: O Lord Almighty, look upon our misery and remember us and do not forget us.

*Isaac S. Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship. This reflection is an edited version of a sermon Isaac preached at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio, in 2010 for the congregation's annual spiritual renewal weekend.*

# Leading for the long haul

**Glen Alexander Guyton** is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA and pastors a church plant with Cyndi, his wife, in San Antonio.

One of my favorite Mennonite Church USA songs is, "Come, Walk with Us, the Journey Is Long." As leaders, we must lead for the long haul. Leadership means understanding that we are called to guide those who follow us to a future destination and to prepare them for it. No leader can change the past or the present, but a competent leader can lay a foundation that will help others overcome their past, endure their current situation and hope for a prosperous future. The wise leader assesses the present and leads not for what is but for what will be—leading as if he or she has already received the desired outcome.

**Imagine you are leading a ministry** of 50 people and the church has set a goal of doubling participation in three years. Leading for the long haul means you are prepared for this growth. You have envisioned how all 50 new congregants will fit into your building. You have updated your systems and procedures so that you can effectively minister to and track the new families who will soon grace your doors.

Imagine you are a college president and understand that the number of racial/ethnic students in the United States will increase dramatically between now and 2040. What do you do? Leading for the long haul means you shape the faculty and programs of your college to meet the predicted demand. You ignore those who say, "Give me that old time religion." You honor the past by charting a path to a bright future, one that honors the contributions of those who came before but is not held hostage by their ghosts.

> The wise leader assesses the present and leads not for what is but for what will be—leading as if he or she has already received the desired outcome.

As Paul was headed to Rome, he understood that the path to his destination would be fraught with danger (Acts 27–28). He tried to warn those with him about the perils they would soon face. His ability to follow the voice of God in the midst of the tempest and lead for the long haul allowed 276 people to have the hope of a prosperous future.

While leading others, Paul was bitten by a venomous viper, which he quickly shook off into the fire. Many of the native people who witnessed this expected Paul to die, since that is what history dictated. What they did not understand was that God had a purpose for Paul that gave him power that far exceeded the expectations of humankind. Paul was leading for the long haul, and nothing was going to deter him from reaching his God-ordained destination.

**Here are three actions** (which I think sound better in Spanish) for long-haul leaders to keep in mind:

- Muévete (move it)—Move toward your vision of the future. Don't just stand around navel gazing but move forward in faith and with sound practices. You don't get from point A to point B by sitting still.
- Sacúdete (shake it)—As you lead for the long haul, you may experience a few bumps and bruises along the way. You may feel like you are in the midst of a tempest or stranded on a desert island with unfamiliar faces. You may even get bit once or twice. You may feel like wallowing in self-pity or depression, but as a God-ordained leader, you have to shake it off.
- Sopórtate (support it)—Put in place policies, procedures and systems that will undergird the vision for the long haul. Long-haul plans need support. A trucker driving from Kalona, Iowa, to Reedley, Calif., will make sure his or her truck is in tip-top shape. The truck will be filled with fuel, the route clearly mapped and the tire pressure adjusted. The trucker will be well rested and understand the length of the journey ahead. Why? So that both driver and cargo arrive at the destination safely and on time.

Once we begin leading for the long haul, we can settle into our roles and work and carry out our mission with confidence, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ," in whatever capacity the Lord has called us to. This could be in formal ministry, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods or simply in our own homes. TM

# I am a Christian

I attend church fairly regularly. I am into biblical studies not only because it is interesting but because the Bible is the foundational text for the church and we need to understand it in all its complexities. I love singing hymns. I believe no one comes to the Father but through Jesus. Of late, however, I have a harder and harder time identifying as a Christian.

At first, I thought it was because I'm no longer in seminary, an explicitly Christian context, but that wasn't it. I began struggling with this when I worked at Prison Fellowship International, an explicitly Christian organization. I thought, Perhaps it's because I'm doing "real" work outside a faith-based context. That was getting closer, but wasn't quite it. Finally, it struck home. The far right is winning, but not in the way they think.

**I have fallen into the trap** of letting the loud far right define "Christian." These are the Christians (mostly men) who go on Sean Hannity and complain about Obama insisting that church-affiliated organizations (e.g. schools and hospitals, not the churches themselves) must provide insurance that offers complete health care for women is the same thing as Nazism, yet they are silent when a pastor advocates putting people in concentration camps, as pastor Charles L. Worley did earlier this year. Or these Christians trumpet the cause of Israel while perpetuating anti-Semitic theology. Or they claim there is no war on women but rewrite the Violence Against Women Act so that it protects only certain women and certain crimes. Or they rant and rave about freedom but are quick to deny it to others, especially Muslims.

It is time for progressive Christians to reclaim the vocabulary of faith.

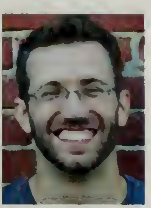
The problem is that the far right is being allowed to define what it means to be Christian. And that definition is judgmental, bigoted, sheltered, hypocritical, insincere and uncaring. To this we can add anti-science and anti-intellectual.

Yet, in contrast to popular perception, it is precisely because of my faith that I am pro-gay rights, pro-women's rights, antiracist, anti-imperialist and committed to Jewish-Christian dialogue and reconciliation. That I proclaim Jesus as Lord means that I cannot participate in nationalism and cannot deny civil rights to my LGBTQ siblings or full health-care coverage to women. My faith is the reason I am passionate for freedom of (and from) religion. My faith is the reason I love education and support open and free inquiry. It is because of my faith that I am pro-science and cannot deny the evidence in support of the theory of evolution. I care for the environment because I believe God created the heavens and the earth, and to violate the created order and abuse Creation is to violate the will of God. I hold to these beliefs not in spite of my faith but because of my faith.

**What frustrates me most** is the way right wing Christianity has co-opted the language of faith. They are the ones who use words such as "faithful" and "biblical" and "Jesus the Savior" and "God the Creator." They are usually portrayed as the ones who act out of "faith" or "religion" while the progressive elements act out of a desire for "tolerance," "civil rights" or "equity."

However, this is not necessarily true. I believe in biblical justice, justice that is concerned for the least of these, that teaches us to love our neighbor and love the Lord, that holds us accountable for failing in these things, that holds us especially accountable if we knowingly violate these things, a justice that places human dignity before profits or personal wealth or being practical. My faith cannot deny the findings of science or academic inquiry (e.g., the problematic nature of the Bible's historicity) because they are inconvenient for my faith. It is precisely because I believe in Jesus the Savior and God the Creator and worship a God who is paradoxically merciful and just that I am committed to justice in all its forms. And this understanding of God is rooted (though not wholly) in the God revealed in the Bible.

**I've had enough** of the far right defining what it means to be a Christian. It is time for progressive Christians to stand up and reclaim the vocabulary of faith. When speaking about social justice, we must use "biblical," we must speak of God's will for humanity. I am not advocating for "praying in the streets" (Matthew 6.5), but I advocate reclaiming the language of faith from the far right. They are not the spokesmen and women of Christianity. They are not representative of my faith, my convictions. It is time I have the courage to stand up and say, "I am a Christian." TM



**Justin James King** is a member of Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Group charts hope for church's multicultural future

## Racial/ethnic leaders look at ways for diverse church membership to thrive.

Carol Roth

Roy Williams, a Mennonite Education Agency board member and former Mennonite Church USA moderator; and Madeline Maldonado, associate pastor at Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Arca de Savlación in Fort Myers, Fla., and a Mennonite Mission Network board member, participate in small group discussions during the Hope for the Future II Conference Jan. 25-27.

More than 60 racial/ethnic leaders in Mennonite Church USA gathered Jan. 25-27 in Leesburg, Va., to encourage unity, celebrate the denomination's multicultural progress and begin outlining specific ways to help the entire church thrive as its membership rapidly becomes more diverse.

"Hope ... for the Future II: Persevering with Jesus (Hebrews 11:1-12:3)," held at the National Conference Center near Washington, D.C., gathered leaders from Mennonite agencies, educational institutions and congregations throughout the denomination.

The event, which was open only to members of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (Africans, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans), was a follow-up to a Jan. 9-11, 2011, meeting in Tampa, Fla., in which participants freely discussed their experiences in the church. As in Tampa, attendees in Leesburg rekindled and developed relationships as they discussed challenges they share in common. But they focused mainly on developing concrete ways to move forward the broader church's longtime efforts to embrace racial reconciliation and diversity.

The three-day event was sponsored by Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Mission Network.

"The purpose of this gathering is for people to be able to talk openly and freely about their experiences in the church and to talk openly and freely about how they want to help transform the church," said Carlos Romero, executive director of Mennonite Education Agency and a member of the group's planning committee.

**The group concluded the gathering** by forming smaller consensus groups that agreed that a strategic plan emphasizing leadership development, mutual care/support and policymaking should be produced.

They also called for another meeting within a year that would expand beyond racial/ethnic leaders to include other denominational leaders and those who strongly support the transformation of the church.

"This is not about leaving anybody out," Romero said. "But it is about giving this group an opportunity to get to know each other, finding ways of supporting each other within the system and responding to the church in a positive way. It is indeed about hope for the future,"

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Mennonite Church USA's moderator-elect, set the tone for the event by urging the group to walk by faith inspired by hope.

Soto Albrecht referenced the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who wrote in his classic 1963 Letter from Birmingham Jail that the Christian church can't just be a thermometer reflecting the cultural norms of the times but rather a thermostat that changes the community.

We have moved from tokenism. We have arrived at a critical mass. Can we now produce systematic changes?—Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

She said that if the Mennonite church is to thrive, racial/ethnic leaders must commit to helping the church to proactively address its rapidly shifting demographics that reflect what is also happening in America and throughout the world. U.S. Census reports estimate that non-Hispanic whites will become a minority of the total population after 2040. Anabaptist church membership among white North American and European churches is declining, while Asian, African and Latin American churches are growing rapidly.

The emphasis on Jesus, the Gospels, peace, justice and service is a powerful draw, particularly in places where ethnic and socioeconomic political strife has ripped apart nations and families.

After the Mennonite Church (MC) and General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) merged, a 2006 study by the Young Center of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College study found that from 2000 to 2005, 25 percent of new Mennonites were nonwhite, compared with just 6 percent from 1995 to 2000.

Meanwhile, Mennonite Church USA recently reported a 6.6 percent membership decline the past two years, from 104,687 to 97,737—a nearly 19 percent drop in the past 12 years. The report did not include new church plants.

"People of color, don't lose your prophetic voice," Soto Albrecht said. "We have moved from tokenism. We have arrived at a critical mass (including at leadership levels within the church). Can we now produce systematic changes? I want to believe and have faith in God that we can."

Other speakers presented topics such as understanding what multiculturalism truly means for the church and individuals and that not just whites but people of color must become interculturally competent.

A presentation on the history of racism noted that the idea of race was socially constructed in the 17th century to justify the transatlantic African slave trade, attacks on indigenous cultures and the taking of their lands through colonialism.

White privilege was nonexistent during Jesus' time on earth. However, institutional racism continues to tear at the humanity of whites and people of color alike.

John Powell, recently retired from Mennonite Mission Network after 23 years of antiracism work, led a discussion that chronicled the denomination's efforts over the past half-century to address internal racism. Disillusioned when the Minority Ministries Council was disbanded in the 1970s as Hispanics and African-Americans divided, Powell left the Mennonite Church, then returned years later.

The purpose of this gathering is for people to be able to talk openly and freely about their experiences in the church.—Carlos Romero

Powell and others in attendance who were part of those past efforts acknowledged that many of the same issues that were raised more than 40 years ago, such as racial insensitivity and lack of support for people of color in leadership, are still being raised today.

However, they agreed that one of the key lessons learned is that members of racial/ethnic groups must work together in love and in partnership with their white brothers and sisters to help the entire church live into Jesus' mission.

The group aims to engage the broader church and will produce a report from the event to be shared with all of the institutions represented. Some of the themes that emerged are listed in the box on this page.

**The meetings ended with worship** and Communion led by Michelle Armster, an associate pastor for community life at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., and served by Soto Albrecht and Rafael Barahona, director for Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education for Mennonite Education Agency.

Tony Brown, a Hesston (Kan.) College sociology professor and internationally acclaimed baritone, inspired the group with his singing, and pastor Sunoko Lin of Indonesian Christian Fellowship Maranatha, Northridge, Calif., and a member of the Mennonite Mission Network board of directors, delivered a message of hope. Powell received special recognition for his contributions to the church. Attendees encircled Powell in prayer.

A Hope for the Future video can be found here: www.mennonitemission.net/Stories/Multimedia/Pages/HopefortheFuture.aspx—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network. A joint press release of Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Mission Network, and Mennonite Education Agency*

## Hope for the Future emerging themes

- **The importance of racial/ethnic leaders speaking with unified voices**
- **Honoring those pioneers in the denomination who made it possible for many of the leaders present to be in their current roles**
- **Recognizing the rich diversity in the denomination**
- **The importance for all work being grounded in the Bible**
- **Strong commitment to Anabaptist teachings, including service, community, justice, discipleship and reconciliation—*Wil LaVeist***

# A trip to the border

## Executive Board members, churchwide staff visit Mexico on Jan. 11.

**Grupos Beta:** Waiting in Nogales, Mexico, Mexican citizens deported from the United States recount their experiences with (from left) Stanley Green (center right), Dick Thomas and Rick Stiffney. Residents often live great distances from Nogales, and the Mexican government maintains the Grupos Beta facility, where residents can make free phone calls and purchase discounted bus tickets.

Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board and staff members and staff members from other churchwide agencies focused on immigration issues during the Executive Board's Jan. 9-11 meeting in Phoenix. This focus included a Jan. 9 "prayer walk" past the Maricopa (Ariz.) County Supreme Court and several immigration detention facilities, including one of Sherriff Joe Arpaio's (see photo on page 35). More than two dozen people from the board meeting also spent Jan. 11 traveling to Tucson, Ariz., and then Nogales, Mexico.

Participants who attend the Mennonite Church USA biennial convention in Phoenix in July will be able to participate in similar activities during the week there.

The Jan. 11 trip began with a stop in Tucson and an introduction to the BorderLinks program. The program sponsors short immersion trips along the border with the trips ranging in length from one day to three weeks. The Mennonite Church USA group was one of abut 70 that will make such a trip this year.

From Tucson, the group traveled to Nogales, Mexico, and spent an hour visiting with Mexican residents who had been picked up in the United States by the Border Patrol and returned to Mexico. The Border Patrol simply drops them off in Mexico and provides no further help. Some of the residents are many miles from their homes and know no one in Nogales. So the Mexican government sponsors the Grupos Beta facility, where residents can make free phone calls and purchase discounted bus tickets.

When the Mennonite Church USA group visited on Jan. 11, there were 10-15 people waiting outside for bus rides. The Mennonite Church USA group split into smaller groups, and six people who speak Spanish translated the stories for the smaller groups.

A 20-something man said he was eating a meal in a restaurant when U.S. immigration agents came to him and accused him of drunk driving—even though he had no car. Ignorant of the U.S. court system, he did as he was advised and pled guilty. That, in turn, left a felony on his record and now makes it impossible for him to ever be admitted into the United States.

**One frightened 16-year-old boy** who had been picked up in the Arizona desert was alone a long way from home and knew no one. He told the group he wanted to get a job in the United States.

A 20-something mother had lived in Oxnard, Calif., for years and left behind a husband, three U.S.-born children and an employer who needed her help picking strawberries.

Employment was the overriding theme for the day, as organizers took the Mennonite Church USA group to two other locations nearby.

Prior to the 2008 recession, the economy in the Maquilador sector of northern Mexico was booming, with many factories providing employment. Boom towns grew up around the factories as workers moved in from farther south in Mexico. But when the recession hit, most factories closed, leaving workers without jobs and stranded.

**Many of the workers' children** also are not able to attend school. So a sister organization to BorderLinks, called Hogar de Esperanza y Paz (Home of Hope and Peace), now provides schooling and meals for children.

The Mennonite Church USA group visited the facility, then traveled to a shuttered factory with a boom town nearby (see photo at right).

After crossing back into Arizona, the Mennonite Church USA group visited a part of the wall near where a teenaged boy had recently been shot and killed on the Mexican side by U.S. Border Patrol agents, allegedly for throwing stones.

Before the group left the wall, Tucson resident Tina Stoltzfus Schlabach led them in a prayer. Schlabach is one of the local organizers for Phoenix convention participants who wish to participate in a BorderLinks trip in July.

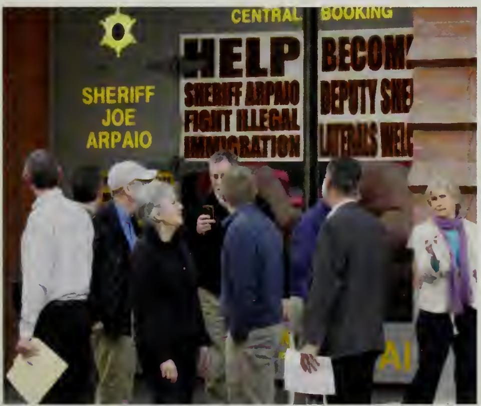
Back in Tucson, the Mennonite Church USA group had dinner at a ministry serving the needs of people released from detention centers. Casa Mariposa (Butterfly House) is a hospitality center that housed several permanent staff members and four recently released men on the day the Mennonite Church USA group visited.

Each of the men and the house cook were invited to tell as much of their stories as they wished. One man was from Brazil, one was from Ecuador and one was from El Salvador. The stays in detention ranged from nine months to seven years. One young man had been picked up in the Arizona desert after walking for five days and nights in an attempt to get to New Jersey.

The Mennonite Church USA group finished the day with a time of reflection before heading back to Phoenix from Tucson.—*Article and photos by Everett J. Thomas*

Mennonite Church USA board and staff members overlook a boom town in the industrial Maquilador sector of Nogales, Mexico. When the industrial boom went bust in 2008, many residents were stranded in the town with no or reduced employment.

**Casa Mariposa:** Giving only his first name, Santiago describes his nine months in a detention facility to Mennonite Church USA staff and board members on Jan. 11 in a hospitality house.



Mennonite Church USA board and staff members stop in front of a detention facility operated by Maricopa County (Ariz.) Sherriff Joe Arpaio during a prayer walk through Phoenix on Jan. 9.

# Convention planners hope for $30,000 in offerings

## New Sunday school curriculum, undocumented young adults will be recipients.

At each biennial convention of Mennonite Church USA, a special offering is received to support a chosen ministry of the church. At this summer's convention in Phoenix, participants will have the opportunity to contribute toward two initiatives: Mennonite Church USA's DREAMer Fund and MennoMedia's forthcoming Sunday school curriculum for children, *Shine: Living in God's Light*.

"Convention offers us a great opportunity not only to fellowship as one body but to touch many lives through our giving," says Glen Alexander Guyton, director of finances and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA.

The goal is to raise $15,000 for each of the designated projects, for a total of $30,000. The *Shine* offering will be on July 3, during the joint adult/youth worship service. The DREAMer Fund offering will be on July 2, during the adult worship and morning youth worship services.

**DREAMer Fund was established** last fall to help Mennonites who qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program pay the application fee of $465. DACA is a U.S. administrative policy change that went into effect on Aug. 15, 2012. Tammy Alexander, senior legislative associate for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), explains, "While this policy change is not a path toward citizenship, it allows undocumented immigrants who are under the age of 31, came to the U.S. before the age of 16 and have resided in the U.S. for at least five years to legally obtain work permits and gain protection from deportation."

Those who qualify for the DACA program are commonly referred to as "DREAMers," after the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, a proposed bipartisan legislation through which qualifying undocumented youth would be eligible for a six-year-long conditional path to citizenship. It has not passed. Mennonites who qualify for DACA and are granted DREAMer Fund assistance will be given a loan of up to two-thirds of DACA's application fee, or $310. Convention planners hope to raise $15,000 to help 50 young Mennonites.

"DACA is intended for young adults who were raised and educated in the United States and should be seen as valuable resources to our country and our communities," says Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA.

She says Saulo Padilla, immigration education coordinator for MCC U.S., introduced the idea for the DREAMer Fund to Iglesia Menonita Hispana last August, and IMH raised money to initiate the fund. The Intercultural Relations Reference Committee then gave their support and decided to develop guidelines for the fund in Mennonite Church USA. The IRRC also contributed $5,000 to the fund.

**The *Shine: Living in God's Light*** curriculum will be available for congregational use beginning in the fall of 2014 and available for preview in March 2014.

"The current curriculum, *Gather 'Round*, was designed to last for an eight-year period, and those eight years are about up," says Amy Gingerich, director of media at MennoMedia. "Patterns of faith formation and ways of doing Christian education have changed in the last eight years. It's important to have Sunday school curricula stay current with the times so that the examples and activities offered to children in Sunday school are relevant to their lives."

*Shine* will be copublished by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, longstanding publishing partners. It is estimated that the development of *Shine* will cost MennoMedia $100,000 per year for a four-year development phase.

Gingerich says, "One of the reasons I feel so passionately about *Shine* and the importance of churchwide support for the project is that being the church together involves all ages. Welcoming children into the story of God's love is a big part of what it means to be Christian."—*Hilary J. Scarsella for Mennonite Church USA*

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– Ted and Sue Noffsinger, Creekside Church of the Brethren

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# Singing out the good news

## Mennonite Mission Network choir bridges cultures with music

Craig Welscott

(First row, from left) Jamie Ross, Lefuarn Harvey, Kelsey Hochstetler, Ann Jacobs. (Back row, from left) Sandy Miller, Brenda Hess, John Lapp and Steve Hochstetler Shirk sing in Mennonite Mission Network's Work in Progress Choir.

The Work in Progress Choir—a multiethnic, intergenerational, interdenominational, Mennonite Mission Network ensemble—aims to glorify God and broaden the music that Mennonites sing. It is led by three women with a passion for worship and music.

"Worship is what I live to do," says Ann Jacobs, office services coordinator for Mission Network in Elkhart, Ind., who was recently given paid time to coordinate the choir.

**Jacobs, and the other two women**, Lefuarn Harvey, partnership coordinator, and Sandy Miller, director of church relations, began making music together in 2005. Other colleagues who loved to sing gravitated toward them, and Work in Progress Choir was born. The group usually consists of seven to 10 voices, "whoever is available at the time," Jacobs says.

"It's an opportunity for me to connect with God and to give God what he deserves," Jacobs says. "When I'm worshiping with others, it seems like more is being given to God—and we serve a mighty God, who deserves more than my individual worship."

Heartily agreeing with Jacobs' emphasis on worship, Miller adds that Work in Progress is a beautiful way to begin to put into practice Mennonite Church USA's commitment to becoming more racially diverse.

Steve Hochstetler Shirk, budget manager, says singing moves head knowledge into the heart. It also helps him connect his desk job with church life outside the office.

In addition to her work at Mennonite Mission Network, Jacobs is enrolled in Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Christian formation studies. She supports the Anabaptist faith while remaining a committed member at New Life Fellowship Ministries, an Apostolic church in South Bend, Ind.

Jacobs says that before God led her to Mission Network, she could never have imagined having any connection to the Mennonite denomination.

"But here I find myself as part of the larger body of Christ," Jacobs says. "When I look out over a Mennonite congregation, I really do see God."

The music that Work in Progress sings is not a performance. "It's a ministry," Jacobs says. "It's all about giving to God. It's about service—giving our offerings of worship and finances, giving of ourselves, giving God who is in us and joining that together with God who is in others."

**Harvey, the choir director** in her Baptist congregation, said she sometimes has to laugh as Work in Progress members who have grown up with a Western classical music background struggle to let go of singing "from the book." Harvey is more used to choir rehearsals that frequently move into worship mode when the Holy Spirit moves.

"At first, [most white Mennonites] are a little tentative," she says. "But, having heard them sing, I know they can do it. Maybe I push them too hard, but it does come out once I convince them they can improvise. Gospel music just isn't limited to notes on a page."—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Total enrollment in Mennonite schools drops

## Mennonite students in higher education and PreK-12 also decreases.

Mennonite Education Agency annually produces a booklet that provides the latest and most complete picture of what has happened and is happening in Mennonite education.

"MEA Reports Fall 2012" provides valuable information and illustrates the important role of Mennonite education in supporting the mission of the church.

This is the sixth year that MEA has made the booklet available: www.MennoniteEducation.org/ANNUAL2012.

Section one includes MEA's annual report and summaries of the member schools of Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) and the Mennonite higher education institutions of Mennonite Church USA.

As shown in the chart below, Mennonite Church USA students include only those who reported attending a Mennonite Church USA congregation. All other Mennonites are included in the All Mennonite category.

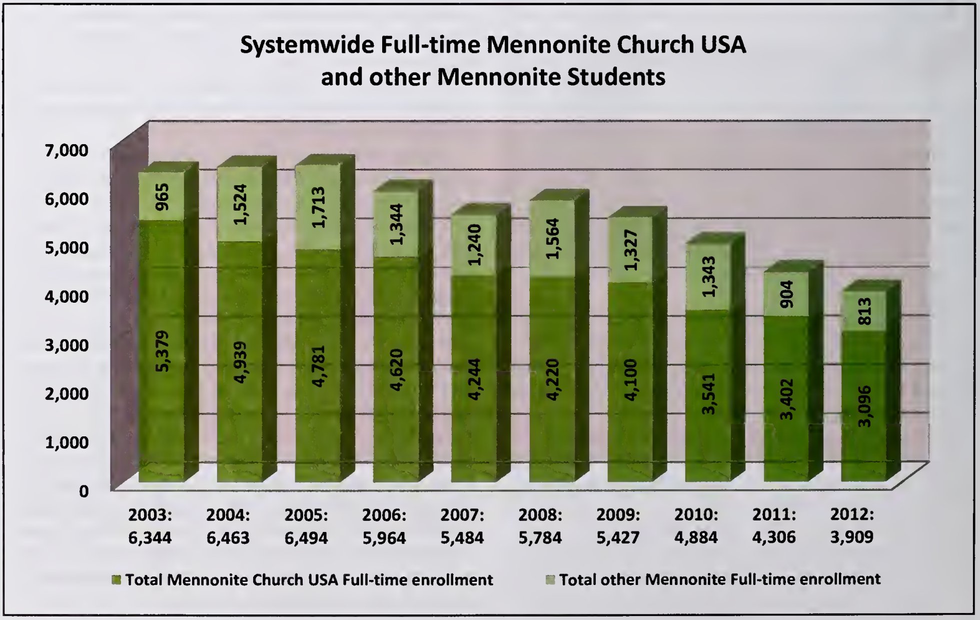
The number of Mennonite Church USA students in higher education in fall 2012 (1,184) decreased from the 2011 total (1,264) for a combined decrease of 80 while preK-12 decreased 226 for a total net decrease of 306 in fall 2012.

The chart on page 39 shows the total enrollment headcount by educational level.

Mennonite educational institutions touched the lives of 13,386 students (based on headcount) in fall 2012, a decrease of 643 (-4.6 percent) students from the 2011 total of 14,029. In higher education, the total headcount decreased by 129 students (undergraduate -98, graduate -48 and seminary -30, with an increase of 47 in adult degree-completion programs) while preschool, elementary and secondary education levels showed a decline of 514 (-5.5 percent).

All higher education institutions reported their enrollment numbers. For the academic year 2012-2013, there are 30 MSC member schools, and MEA received data from all of them.

For the previous academic year, data was received from 32 MSC member schools. It should be noted that a decrease in the number of MSC schools affects the total number of students reported. The decline in MSC numbers is influenced by the fact that two schools that reported last year are no longer MSC members.—*Rachel Nussbaum Eby of Mennonite Education Agency*

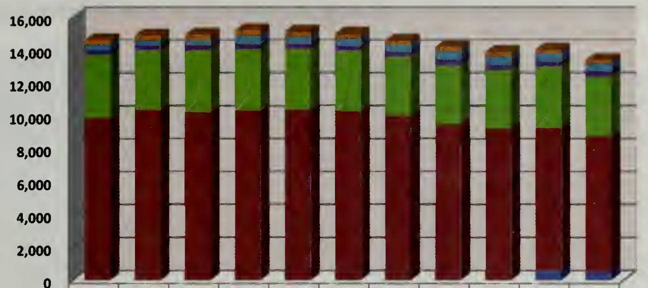


Systemwide Full-time Mennonite Church USA and other Mennonite Students

Mennonite Education Agency

Mennonite Education Agency

## Total Enrollment Headcount by Educational Level



| | Fall 2002 Total 14,609 | Fall 2003 Total 14,885 | Fall 2004 Total 14,935 | Fall 2005 Total 15,206 | Fall 2006 Total 15,126 | Fall 2007 Total 14,990 | Fall 2008 Total 14,573 | Fall 2009 Total 14,191 | Fall 2010 Total 13,874 | Fall 2011 Total 14,029 | Fall 2012 Total 13,386 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 🟧 Seminary | 291 | 314 | 323 | 317 | 306 | 296 | 258 | 282 | 281 | 258 | 228 |
| 🟦 Graduates | 316 | 293 | 324 | 546 | 459 | 451 | 430 | 491 | 480 | 484 | 436 |
| 🟪 Adult Degree-Completion | 302 | 313 | 325 | 292 | 298 | 302 | 279 | 355 | 326 | 305 | 352 |
| 🟩 Undergraduates | 3,841 | 3,614 | 3,725 | 3,726 | 3,714 | 3,664 | 3,601 | 3,588 | 3,573 | 3,710 | 3,612 |
| 🟥 Mennonite Schools Council | 9,859 | 10,351 | 10,238 | 10,325 | 10,349 | 10,277 | 10,005 | 9,475 | 9,214 | 8,711 | 8,241 |
| 🟦 MECN Preschools | | | | | | | | | | 561 | 517 |

Headcount information from Mennonite Early Childhood Network preschool/childcare centers (non-MSC schools) is included for the second year. For the academic years 2012-2013 and 2011-2012, MEA received data from seven preschool/childcare centers. The data varies from year to year depending on which preschool centers report information.

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- ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19/2013)
- AMAZON RAINFOREST & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (Jan 16-26/2014)
- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS (June 13-26/2014)

**EDUCATIONAL TOURS**
- BRITISH ISLES (ENGLAND, SCOTLAND & WALES) (Sept 13-25/2013)
- JAMAICA: ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY & FRUITS (Jan 18-27/2014)
- EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (Dec 9-15/2013)

**CUSTOM TOURS**
- MEDA IN MOROCCO (April 2-12/2013)
- HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR TO EUROPE (May 24-June 6/2013)
- COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15/2013)

**HOLY LAND TOURS**
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25/2013)
- LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN & CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7/2013)
- EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL WITH TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17/2013)
- FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF MOSES WITH PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31/2013)
- HARVEST OLIVES & EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE WITH PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (Oct 12-21/2013)
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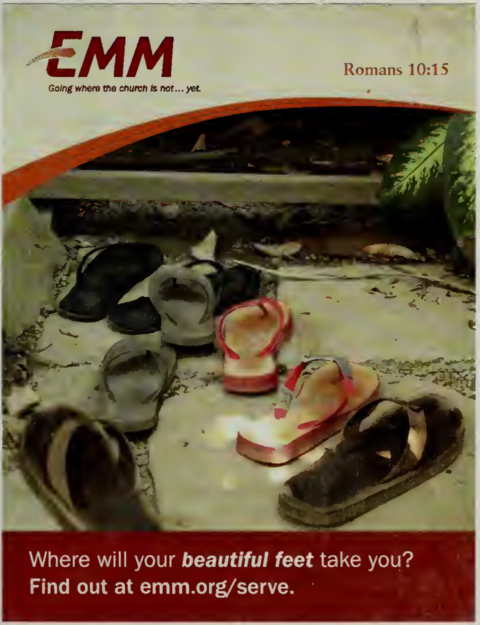

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# An interview with Erica Littlewolf

## Personal, collective transformation through the Indigenous Vision Center

**Erica, what is your current leadership position in the Mennonite church?** I work with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Central States with the Indigenous Vision Center. I connect with indigenous organizations already doing social justice work in the United States and support their work. I also connect with indigenous issues in Canada through the Aboriginal Neighbors program.

**How did you find yourself in that position?** Mennonite Central Committee runs in my family, and I started with MCC in 2000 as a summer service worker in my home community of Busby, Mont. I spent four summers working in my local community through the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church. I then joined the MCC Central States board and also began volunteering within many MCC and Mennonite church committees. In 2007, a service worker position opened up at the Oglala Lakota Nation Unit in Pine Ridge, S. D., so I applied and began working with MCC there. The OLN Unit then transitioned into my current work with the Indigenous Vision Center.

**What is it about this work that you are passionate about?** I love it all. Connecting globally with other indigenous people is inspiring and life giving. I find that we have similar issues and problems, and I am always amazed at the indi*genius* that comes when we can come together in similar experiences, even though we live worlds apart. I especially enjoy seeing how other groups work toward healing, justice and transformation.

One central piece of my work right now is addressing the doctrine of discovery, which was the theological justification that settlers used to take land from indigenous people. Last May, at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the World Council of Churches called for the doctrine of discovery to be repudiated, and it has become a growing movement. I am working with others to discern the next steps churches can take in repudiating it.

**You are also a member of the steering committee for the Mennonite Church USA Women in Leadership Project. How does this connect to your work and interests?** I feel that colonization and the "isms" (racism, sexism, etc.) intersect. The same mentality of domination is at the root of all injustice. I feel that my work with IVC coincides with the Women in Leadership Project and enhances my work and experience with the steering committee. I've always been involved with women's issues in one way or another, but this project is a good way to work at making changes and progress in the church toward undoing patriarchy. It is exciting work and cutting edge.

**What is the transformation you hope will happen through this work?** Honestly, I don't know what transformation is needed, but I can dream of a different world, so I know it exists. The mystery and the not knowing is the best part because it allows me to work collaboratively and collectively with others to figure out together what we need to learn personally and how to take that learning to the church. I'm excited to be a part of trying to figure it out.

**How can the church encourage healthy relating across gender lines?** In my work with IVC we use a document called "Qualities of Authentic Relationships Across Differences" to guide our work. I believe this can be applied to gendered relationships as well. If we can learn to be in authentic relationships with ourselves, then we can be in authentic relationships with others despite our differences, and we can connect in an appropriate way to the land that sustains us. It's amazing how much change is possible if we first change ourselves.—*This Q&A is part of the Women in Leadership Project, co-coordinated by Hilary J. Scarsella and Joanna Shenk. If you would like to get involved with the Project, email Hilary at hilarys@mennoniteusa.org.*

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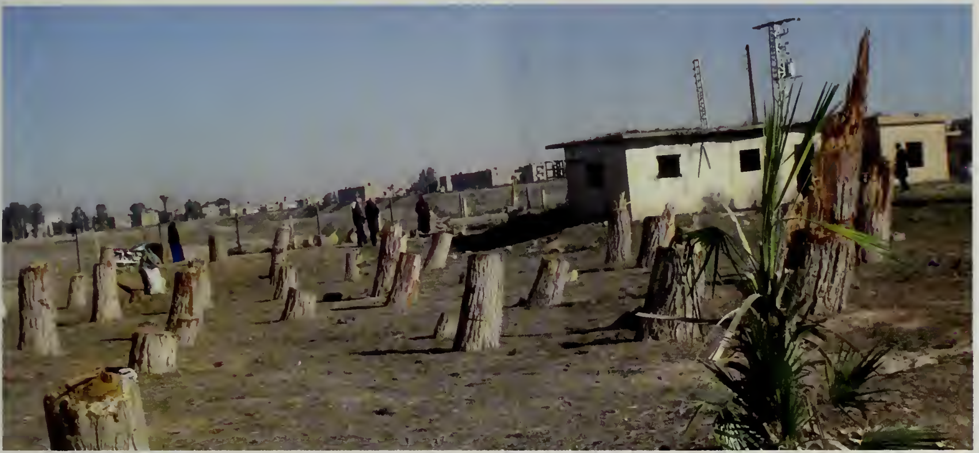
# Syrians struggle with freezing temperatures

## Current generations learn that 'the language of weapons and power prevail.'



(Syrian Orthodox Church Photo/Archbishop Matta Roham)

Firewood collection is destroying a forest of old trees in northeast Syria as people facing poverty and conflict struggle to cope with harsh winter conditions.

As nighttime temperatures plummet to below freezing in many parts of Syria, people are struggling to stay warm and dry.

In an email message to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Archbishop Matta Roham of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch said firewood collection is now destroying the forest of old trees in the National Park in Hasaake, in northeast Syria.

"I asked those who were cutting and carrying the wood why they do this," says Roham, who visited the national park on Jan. 15. "The answer came, 'We are poor and we have nothing to live on. The weather is very cold, and we need to warm our houses and make our living.' "

This email message is among many that MCC representative Sarah Adams receives from MCC partners in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, which are trying to meet some of the basic humanitarian needs of families affected by the prolonged Syrian conflict. Adams is from Westerville, Ohio.

**MCC is responding by supporting** distribution of food, MCC kits and blankets, winter clothing and heaters. MCC also supports training in peacebuilding, trauma and humanitarian assistance.

To meet the growing needs, MCC is seeking additional funds to extend this assistance for a longer period of time and increase the number of families receiving this support.

"The severity of the situation is increasing daily," says Adams, who is based in Lebanon. "People are being forced to take new measures to keep their families alive, including returning to conflict-riddled neighborhoods in search of wooden doors and furniture that can be burned for warmth."

According to United Nation estimates, the overall number of people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria quadrupled between March and December 2012, from 1 million to 4 million.

**It is estimated that up to a million** Syrian refugees will need help during the first half of 2013, with most of these located in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt.

Even as the humanitarian needs continue to increase, Adams said MCC partners are already preparing to help people heal from the trauma and psychological damage resulting from this prolonged conflict.

MCC partner Bishop Jean Kawak of the Syrian Orthodox Church says: "The impact of the crisis will not be limited to the absence of food or shelter. Neither will it be limited to the physical damages of today.

"The bigger impact will be the psychological one. The current generations are being taught that the language of weapons and power prevail. It will take years to reduce the psychological damage this crisis has caused to our children."

To learn more about MCC's response in the Middle East and to contribute to MCC's ongoing work there, visit mcc.org/middleeastcrisis.—*Gladys Terichow of MCC Canada*

# Wealth, capitalism focus of AMBS' pastors week

## Keynoter Kim Tan, venture capitalist and Bible teacher, explores Jubilee.

SaeJin Lee

Kim Tan shares his understandings of Jubilee economics at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Pastors Week.

The Pastors Week theme of Jubilee raised topics that are surprising for the annual Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary event in Elkhart, Ind.: wealth creation, business enterprise and capitalism.

Kim Tan, a venture capitalist and Bible teacher, explored biblical teachings about Jubilee, while workshops explored aspects of money and the church.

The planning committee and Everence in Goshen, Ind., which cosponsored the week, hoped to foster conversations that are not always easy to have in congregations, so they encouraged business leaders to attend along with pastors.

Tan recounted how when he was a doctoral student he became convinced that living out biblical Jubilee principles is at the heart of Christian faith. His profession now is in biochemistry, but he works with the goal of "creating environments for human flourishing."

**In an evening session,** cosponsored with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates and the Michiana chapter of MEDA, Tan emphasized the need for financial capital to solve problems of poverty. As examples, he described the work of the Transformational Business Network in Cambodia and several African countries to create jobs, restore land and introduce solar-powered tools.

Tan's mission grows out of his understanding of the Bible's teachings. Israelites were told that every three years they should give one-10th of their possessions to the poor. Then every seven years they were to cancel debts, release slaves and let the land, animals and servants rest. In the 50th year, the year of Jubilee, they were to return to original owners all property they had bought in the previous 49 years.

Tan then pointed out that Jesus reinterpreted Old Testament principles to mean, "Jubilee is every day." He emphasized, "In business there are whole loads of opportunities for us as we create wealth. If we have the Jubilee spirit in us we will think of creative and imaginative ways to share that wealth and lift people out of poverty."

**At the end the Pastors Week,** Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, AMBS associate dean for leadership education, sent the 180 participants home with a challenge: "This has sparked a very important conversation. I encourage you to engage that conversation not only with people who think like you do. If phrases like 'compassionate capitalism' make you crazy or angry, I hope you will find people to talk to for whom that is not the case. If you are just chomping at the bit to get on with creating wealth so you can distribute it, I hope you will pause to pay attention to some of the potential dangers of creating wealth. But let's talk to each other."—*Mary E. Klassen of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

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# EMS looks at mental illness close to home

## Participants feel normalized, not stigmatized, at School for Leadership Training

We tend to see mental illness as something that happens out there, to stigmatized strangers on the fringe of our churches, when in fact mental illness affects our families, friends, loved ones, congregants and many of us personally.

This was the recurrent theme of the 2013 School for Leadership Training (SLT) Jan. 21-23 at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS), Harrisonburg, Va., which was titled "Imagine Church as Healing Space."

The event attracted more than 270 participants and resource people who sought to "hear, hold and hope" amid mental health challenges.

**Hosted and planned by EMS,** the event felt historic: Multiple participants said this was the first time in a public church context they had felt part of the group, not in spite of but because of their depression, anxiety, bipolar diagnosis, schizophrenia and more. This was the first time they had felt normalized, not stigmatized, with their journey held in love, not primarily met with silence or marginalization.

A second gift was space to tell and hear the pain mental illness causes both its sufferers and those who love them.

Healing
and Hope
Flow
rough
to the

Lindsey Kolb

Michael A. King, Eastern Mennonite Seminary vice president and seminary dean, addresses the gathering crowd at the School for Leadership Training.

Earl and Pat Martin offered searingly moving glimpses of their journey through their son Hans Martin's development of symptoms of schizo-affective disorder.

Earl shared journal entries he had written during the sleepless nights after Hans was first hospitalized. In these contemporary psalms of lament, Earl raged at a pitiless God who treats his creatures like vermin, snapping off their limbs, leaving them soaked in their own blood. Earl railed at this God as the sick one who should get treatment for insanity.

**He reported that after he stopped writing** of his own volition, spent, his pen kept going and offered words from God, who said that God's own son was in fact in treatment and was the roommate in a neighboring bed whom Earl had feared would hurt Hans.

A third gift was hope. Many at SLT, from participants through resource people, told of confronting the anguish caused by suicide. To name just one example, in a laughter-yet-tear-stirring blending of drama and storytelling, Ted Swartz told of his journey through his comedy partner Lee Eshleman's battle with depression and of how the suicide to which it drove Lee so shattered Ted's own life and career that years have gone into rebuilding. Yet precisely in this heartrendingly open naming of the torment, Swartz offered hope—hope for himself and hope for those still grieving the loss of their own loved ones.—*Joan K. King for Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

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# Drones are coming to civilian life

## Dr. Jay Parrish: Flying robots so small as to look like insects

There are two temptations—one, to reject all things new as evil; and two, to blindly accept all new technologies uncritically. We now face a new technology that at first glance seems evil.

Violence can be more acceptable to an individual if the victim is removed: the dropping of a bomb versus the use of a bayonet. But with each increase in violence we find it easier to justify the next ratchet upward as only a little worse than what happened before. We progress from a landline to a bulky portable phone to a smart phone with little reflection on the implications of having unlimited data available during dinner.

This brings us to drones: UAVs, UASes, flying robots. Most people probably think of Predators flying over Pakistan and dealing sudden death from the sky, but this technology can be used for peace as well as war.

**The proper term is Unmanned Aerial System**, meaning it is a compilation of components (a system) that could even operate autonomously rather than just as an unmanned aircraft (a drone). Drones came about primarily around World War II as flying targets to hone shooting skills. They have since evolved into sophisticated systems that can be piloted from the other side of the world and used to target specific individuals. Since everyone uses "drones" rather than UASes, I'll use drone for military systems and UASes for other systems.

> I can imagine a country in three years with thousands of UASes coursing overhead, delivering enchiladas and hamburgers.

There are several reasons that drones are so attractive. One is that they are cheap, incredibly cheap. While manned aircrafts cost tens or hundreds of millions of dollars, drones cost orders of magnitude less. The first big reconnaissance drone was a jetliner-sized plane called Global Hawk, which cost $50 million and required dozens of support staff. Early Predators were priced at $5 million each because that would make them expendable. Why risk a $100 million fighter when a $5 million system can handle the job? They started out as reconnaissance systems, but soon people saw "targets" (a dehumanizing term) and decided to add weapons.

The second reason they are so loved is that they function without endangering a pilot. You can send a UAS into a radioactive power plant or collapsed building after an earthquake. Because they don't have to carry a pilot, drones save weight for fuel, allowing them to loiter in the sky for days. And because there is no pilot, the boredom factor can be spread over several shifts on the ground. If a drone is shot down over another country, there is no pilot to rescue.

There are a variety of smaller drones, some hand-launched, that are used to monitor or just to see what's over the next hill. Their costs, while still large by most measures, are relatively cheap in military terms. Generally, the smaller the drone, the shorter the time it can remain airborne, generally minutes or hours. But some can be airborne for days or longer.

**So a president finds drones** a desirable option in warfare—they are cheap, persistent and able to target specific people. Although violating another country's airspace is clearly a legal problem, there is no other major downside if the drone is shot down or captured, since there is no pilot. It is a weapon with few negatives and many positives, compared to manned systems.

While a president may be reluctant to send Navy SEALs into other countries to kill specific terrorists or suspected terrorists, it becomes possible with drones, resulting in the infamous Obama "kill list." The problem with using technology to carry out something at a distance is that someone can look very much like a terrorist yet not be one. Simply carrying a tool or tube can make it appear a person has a weapon, and gathering with other men of similar age can look suspicious. What has happened in recent years is that we have gone from targeting individuals to targeting people who match a profile. This opens up a greater possibility of killing the wrong person.

Then there is the time factor—the few seconds of delay between reality and what appears on a screen in Nevada. This can make decision-making difficult and even result in mistaken launching of missiles.

**A recent development has been the addition** of air-to-air missiles to the arsenal that can be deployed on a Predator. This is significant. U.S. drones are no longer alone in the air. In fact, anyone can make or purchase a drone. It's not rocket science, and it's very affordable.

We are all drawn to the idea of projected force, from throwing a stone, shooting an arrow, firing a gun or using a TV remote control. Drones are an extension of this concept. Many are familiar with David Grossman's book *On Killing* and his assertion that we find it easier to kill at a distance and more difficult face-to-face. Yet the technology of drones also allows persistence, meaning the drone can loiter in the air for days. The observers on one side of the world get to know the daily regimen of the targeted person across the world. So they, in effect, know this person's family and

Harold A. (H.A.) Penner

Jay Parrish (right) explains drone technology to (left to right) Rick Stamm and Titus Peachey at the Manheim (Pa.) Township Public Library on Dec. 1, 2012. The event was sponsored by a Lancaster (Pa.) County-based group called 1040 For Peace.

habits. It is not as remote as one may think, making it a little less of a kill-at-a-distance weapon psychologically.

We create enemies when we mistakenly kill innocents or create a climate of constant fear where one never knows when death may strike out of nowhere. One need only imagine living in the United States and knowing that a missile may destroy you and your home without warning. It would be a terrifying world. We may expect such a life in the future, as we are not the only ones who can make drones.

**This not-too-distant future could include** self-replicating systems that collect raw materials, manufacture parts and assemble new systems. This would lead to the next level of drone warfare, which substitutes numbers for single systems. Thousands of small, cheap drones could act like a swarm of bees, communicating and acting as single entity. This is a terrifying concept if you let your imagination go.

We have lived with the consequences of landmines and cluster bombs, which accomplished a military mission but had unintended consequences of unending tenacity. They hung around long after they were wanted, continuing the job of killing a generation after the intended targets. The same could be true of highly sophisticated systems that could well remain for years, dutifully doing what we programmed them to do.

Here lies an irony: I would love to talk about peaceful uses of UASes and encourage Mennonites to consider how they could be used and what safeguards are needed. But what draws interest is the military usage. So let's turn to the uses that may affect you in the next year or so.

The FAA has been tasked with integrating UASes into civilian airspace in the United States. It has postponed this several times. Big concerns are privacy and safety. No one wants a commercial airliner running into clouds of pizza-delivering UASes. And no one really wants to have a tiny autonomous helicopter hovering outside their second floor window, looking in. But we have all become accustomed to iPhones with video capabilities capturing every dumb slip of the tongue or fall on the ice. With nano UASes in the works, systems that look like large insects could be tied to your iPhone and provide a third eye, roaming the restaurant you're visiting and spotting items on a menu board or people you know around the corner.

I can imagine a country in three years with thousands of UASes coursing overhead, delivering enchiladas and hamburgers, so we won't even have to exert the minimal effort of driving. Or medicine for a sick child from the neighborhood pharmacy in the middle of the night.

Or illicit drug traffic.

Consider a topic dear to many Mennonites: agriculture. Imagine a farmer with the ability to get up each morning, fly every inch of his fields, obtain color infrared imagery that shows plant health, maps weed locations and eliminates them all before noon. And it never gets bored or tired.

A UAS allows you to explore more of your world than what you can see. A UAS in a small community in a rural arid region of Africa has the same imaging power as a military drone for a fraction of the cost. It can monitor vegetation, land use and water and can range beyond the village to check up on rumors of wild animals attacking livestock on the outskirts or a road washed out a few miles away.

We create enemies when we mistakenly kill innocents or create a climate of constant fear where one never knows when death may strike out of nowhere.

So here is a new technology. How could Mennonites make use of it in a constructive way? What constraints ought we consider so they do not turn us into 3D data zombies?

The military will use this technology. There is no turning back from an inexpensive instrument that removes danger from the operator. This temptation is too great for a war-oriented country to resist. It is too great a temptation for a peace-loving country as well. Just as with the Predator, it can start with an unarmed observation system and evolve into an armed system as opportunities arise. The temptation is too great.

## What can we do to help our country make good decisions about drone technology?

Will we use this technology? Will we be reflective rather than uncritically accepting? The temptation for me is great. I'd love to combine the ease of ordering online with instant delivery by a system that doesn't give me the flu. The temptation is to make an idol of something that brings ease and security. Will we have faith in God's supply or view a new technology as a way to obtain security, both in delivering pizza as well as delivering death? Will we feel less responsible because there is no carpet bombing? Will this become a golden calf, offering a less obvious way to buy in to military activity as a promise of security, more acceptable in a Mennonite church that quietly brings a flag up by the pulpit?

What can we do to help our country make good decisions about drone technology? How do we do that?

We can help our country see the real cost of this technology rather than focusing on the near-term military advantage. Will the ability to reduce casualties on one side lead to a greater willingness to go to war?

We can help our society see what limits should be available for commercial UASes so that life is not stripped of all privacy. We have gotten used to iPhones without much discussion. And we've all seen how conversations are interrupted by furtive looks at the latest email or tweet. Yet I love having answers at my fingertips. But consider: This will be in three dimensions. Not just a video of your cat doing something cute, but the ability to follow your cat as it roams the neighborhood. What other things will you learn that perhaps you wish you didn't know? Or will others know about you? If we are even more open with information, will society improve as a result?

We can't say that it won't affect us or we won't participate. We can't opt out. The days of saying email doesn't fit with the simple low tech approach of Mennonites are over. Drones will be used by the military. They will be in civilian life. And soon. Meanwhile, we as a community have to be involved in assessing this technology.

We can't ignore drones. They will find us in the end.—*Jay Parrish is professor of practice in the Dutton Institute of Pennsylvania State University and a member of the East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. As far as he knows, he's the only geophysicist in Mennonite Church USA. He says this is something that should change.*

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### WORKERS

**Benedict, Neal**, was licensed as bridge pastor at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on Jan. 27.

**Bornman, Jonathan**, was licensed for service with Eastern Mennonite Missions and around the world at Mount Joy Mennonite Church, Mount Joy, Pa., on Dec. 16, 2012.

### OBITUARIES

**Alderfer, Wilbur L.**, 92, Tiskilwa, Ill., died Dec. 31, 2012, of pneumonia. Spouse: Gratice L. Eichelberger Albrecht. Parents: John V. and Leah Eichelberger Albrecht. Children: Curtis, Carson; five grandchildren; one step-grandchild; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 12 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa.

**Brubaker, Raymond S.**, 82, Lancaster, Pa., died Nov. 4, 2012. Spouse: Ruth Brubaker. Parents: Levi and Anna Brubaker. Children: Ray, Cheryl Buser, Lucy Brubaker; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 8 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

**Clemmer, Jean D. Delp**, 90, Souderton, Pa., died Jan. 25. Spouse: Roy C. Clemmer (deceased). Children: Jonathan, Justine Pletcher, Robert, Janice Kaufman, Lisa Yoder; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 31 at Souderton Mennonite Community.

**Eby, Joyce Lavonne Rutt**, 71, Dillsburg, Pa., died Nov. 24, 2012, of cancer. Spouse: John Wilmer Eby. Parents: Clarence Henry and Elva Sensenig Sauder Rutt. Children: Carol Eby-Good, Scott Stoner-Eby; four grandsons. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Slate Hill Mennonite Church, Camp Hill, Pa.

**Ellison, Chris**, 58, Hesston, Kan., died Jan. 23. Spouse: Ruth Taylor Ellison. Parents: Cleve and Carolyn Ellison. Children: Isaac Ellison, Kaeli Ellison. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Gingrich, Ann Keener**, 81, Goshen, Ind., passed away on Jan.19, at her home. She was born April 15, 1931 in Little Britain, Pa., to the late Clayton and Martha Gish Keener. She married Paul Musser Gingrich Aug. 11, 1951, in Mechanic Grove, Pa. He survives. Also surviving are four sons, Larry P. (Sheila Kline) Gingrich, Birdsboro, Pa.; J. Robert (Joyce) Hooley-Gingrich, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Africa; Jon L. (Rita) Gingrich, Goshen and Michael L. (Bonnie) Gingrich, Elkhart; a daughter, Lynda (Brent) Troyer, South Bend; a son-in-law, Tim (Candy) Cleary, Williamsburg, Va.; a daughter-in-law, Pam Dintaman, Ariz.; three sisters, Barbara (Harold) Shenk, Lancaster, Pa.; Betty (John) Drescher, Quakertown, Pa. and Marie (E. Daniel) Riehl, Lancaster, Pa.: a sister-in-law, Floss Keener and a brother-in-law, Rohrer (Mabel) Eshleman, Lancaster, Pa. Nine grandchildren also survive her. She was preceded in death by a daughter, Bonnie Gingrich Cleary, Aug. 9, 1992; a sister, Ellen Eshelman; and a brother, Robert Keener. A 1948 graduate of Lancaster Mennonite High School, Lancaster, Pa., Ann attended Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., in 1952. She attended Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Conn., 1958-59. In 1971 she received her BA in secondary education from Goshen College and in 1987 her MA in Theology and Ethics from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) Elkhart, Ind. She attended Selly Oak College, Birmingham, UK in 1991. She taught grades 1-8 at Brick Hill Elementary school 1950-51. Along with her husband, Paul, she served as a missionary, teacher and counselor in Ethiopia and Kenya from 1954-69. She opened and operated a guesthouse in Nairobi 1964-65. From 1971-75 she worked as a substitute teacher in the Goshen and Middlebury schools and in 1976 she taught at Goshen College Laboratory Kindergarten. In 1976-77 she served as co-director of Goshen College's Study Service Trimester program in Belize, Central America, and from 1976-1982 she helped Goshen College with exit interviews and retention study. Ann worked at the Mennonite Historical Library from 1981-82, before serving as Pastoral Counselor at AMBS from 1983-90. In 1994-97 she and Paul served as Peace Evangelists for Mennonite Church USA and most recently were serving as overseers for College Mennonite Church. Ann and Paul were recognized by Eastern Mennonite University and Seminary with the 1993 "Distinguished Service Award" in recognition of their lifetime of service. In 2005, AMBS honored Ann with the "Alumni Ministry and Service Award." This was given in honor of her work with victims of abuse. An active member of Belmont Mennonite Church, Ann has facilitated worship leading, sexual abuse survivor groups and done some occasional preaching. She has also served on the Mennonite Stewardship Commission, the Personnel Committee of Mennonite Board of Missions and has led retreats on marriage and family, women's issues and human sexuality in addition to serving as a resource person for Intentional Communities and Christian growth groups. From 1974-91 she was involved with Assembly Mennonite church as a pastoral counselor, elder, worship leader, trustee and occasional preacher. Her hobbies included reading, gardening, home decorating, scrap booking, women's empowerment and her grandchildren.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Graber, Daniel J.**, 83, Goshen, In., died Sept. 30, 2012. Spouse: Mary M. (Marge) Soldner Graber. Parents: Peter P. and Magdalena Wenger Graber. Children: Stephen, Peter, Jeanne Mielke, Julia LaFrance Graber; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

**Hershberger, Edgar Allen**, 93, Milford, Neb., died Dec. 15, 2012. Spouse: DeElda Lucille Eicher Hershberger. Parents: John A. and Susan Rediger Hershberger. Children: Gordon, Gregory, Ray; five grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

**Horst, Ruth Ellen King**, 90, Shillington, Pa., died Jan. 13. Spouse: Luke L. Horst. Parents: Abraham and Alice Hartzler King. Children: Naomi Weaver, Esther Martin, Ellen Helmuth, Margaret Forst, Nancy Perkins, Thomas, Dorcas Cyster; 21 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 20 at Bowmansville Mennonite Church, Lancaster County, Pa.

**Janzen, Orlin C.**, 83, Goessel, Kan., died Dec. 21, 2012. Spouse: Mary Jane Schmidt Janzen. Parents: Dietrich and Lena Schmidt Janzen. Children: Matthew, James. Funeral: Dec. 28 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

**Kauffman, Janet Arlene Byler**, 90, Lititz, Pa., died July 9, 2012, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Ammon S. Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Elsie Mae Kauffman Byler and Jesse J. Byler. Children: Mary Ellen Martin, Richard; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 16 at Neffsville Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

**Kaufman, Dolores May Graber**, 84, Marion S.D., died Jan. 27, of cancer. Spouse: Delbert Kaufman (deceased). Parents: Julius J. and Caroline Kaufman Graber. Children: Kathy Kleinsasser, Arden. Funeral: Jan. 31 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

**Kempf, Wayne Daniel**, 87, Shickley, Neb., died Jan. 17, of a heart attack. Spouse: Esther Lapp Kempf. Parents: Roy H. and Barbara Troyer Kempf. Children: Don, Ellen Miller, David, Dale, Margaret Swartzendruber, Anita; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 21 at Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley.

**Kilheffer, John Henry**, 87, Millersville, Pa., died Dec. 27, 2012. Spouse: Mary Ellen Thomas Kilheffer. Parents: Abram and Dorothy Amand Kilheffer. Children: Dennis E., J. David, J. Edwin, Thomas L.; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at Willow Street Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa.

**Lefever, Grace Buckwalter**, 99, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 4, 2012. Parents: Abram K. and Lettie Buckwalter Lefever. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

**Martin, Arthur**, 81, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Jan. 8, of cancer. Spouse: Mary Metzger Martin. Parents: Alfred and Irene Sitler Martin. Children: Ron, Randy, Jenny Martin; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 13 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

**Mellinger, John Henry**, 82, Ontario, Calif., died Nov. 13, 2012. Spouse: Annetta Mellinger. Parents: John D. and Vera Denlinger Mellinger. Children: Brenda Bewley, William, David, Rosa Lee Price; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 20 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Upland, Calif.

**Miller, Eleanor Elizabeth Warner**, 88, Leo, Ind., died Jan. 7. Spouse: Willis Andrew Miller (deceased). Parents: Albert and Audrey Day Warner. Children: Gary Lee, Danny Ray, Gloria Smith; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 12 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo.

**Miller, Robert J.**, 88, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 4. Spouse: Ellene Long Miller. Parents: Lee and Priscilla Oswald Miller. Children: Steve, Bruce, Beth Miller Kraybill; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 12 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**Moyer, Henry Alderfer**, 93, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 27, 2012. Spouse: Elsie Yothers Moyer (deceased). Parents: Ammon and Lizzy Alderfer Moyer. Children: Laverne, Bob, Nancy Freed; six grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; 10 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

**Nafziger, Joyce Lynn Link**, 61, Wauseon, Ohio, died Jan. 18, of cancer. Spouse: George W. Nafziger (deceased). Parents: Ralph and Patricia Andrews Link. Children: Eric, Ryan, Jena, Joyclyn; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 22 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

**Nickel, Bertha A. Ewert**, 89, Goessel, Kan., died Dec. 26, 2012. Spouse: Arnold Nickel (deceased). Parents: John A. and Bertha Wiebe Ewert. Children: Leo, Harriet DeLay, Elton, Donovan; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Goessel.

**Nyce, Carl M.**, 87, Telford, Pa., died Dec. 24, 2012. Spouse: Eva B. Bergey Nyce. Parents: Howard and Mary Moyer Nyce. Children: Steven C., Sharon Bishop, Karen Reichart, David Lee; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

**Ramseyer, Lois A. Kuhns**, 94, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 19. Spouse: J. Woodrow Ramseyer. Parents: Allen W. and Anna Inez Shupe Kuhns. Children: Elizabeth Robie, Sharon Sivanich, Robert; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 23 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Shetler, Lyle D.**, 80, Pigeon, Mich., died Dec. 29, 2012, of heart failure. Spouse: Betty Burkholder Shetler. Parents: Omar and Katie Kipfer Shetler. Children: Kent, Karla Nussbaum, Ron; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 6 at Michigan Avenue Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

**Snyder, Arlene Brenneman**, 86, Kalona, Iowa, died Jan. 25. Spouse: John Snyder. Parents: Erlis and Martha Marner Brenneman. Children: Steve, Daniel, Rita Wimberly; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 28 at First Mennonite Church of Iowa City.

**Stamm, Jeanne M. Foust**, 85, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 10. Spouse: Denver Stamm (deceased). Parents: Marion and Lodeema Gee Foust. Children: Mark, Tina Lange, Tana Sauder; eight grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 13 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

**Steckley, Anna Marie Shetler**, 95, Harrisonburg, Va., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Floyd Steckley (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Anna Guengerich Shetler. Children: Robert, Reynold, Joanna Mae; foster daughter: Betty Oberholtzer Kreider; three grandchildren; three foster-grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 16 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

**Swartley, Miriam K. Landis**, 97, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 16. Spouse: G. Merrill Swartley (deceased). Parents: Allen M. and Mattie Kulp Landis. Children: Alan, Barbara Swartley, David; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 22 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Tamm, Rachel R. Rosenberger**, 95, Allentown, Pa., died Feb. 4. Spouse: Albert W. Tamm (deceased). Parents: Clayton and Alma Ruth Rosenberger. Children: Clayton, Marlene Royse; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Stephens Funeral Home, Allentown.

**Voran, Paul Stanley**, 89, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 31, 2012. Spouse: Ellen Ruth Lohrentz Voran. Parents: Jacob J. and Christina K. Voran. Child: Roxie Voran; two grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 5 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Weaver, Joseph**, 90, Lancaster, Pa., died Jan. 17. Funeral: Jan. 22 at Bareville Church of the Brethren Cemetery, Bareville, Pa.

**Weldy, Dwight E.**, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Marjorie Conrad Weldy (deceased). Parents: Jacob I. and Rhoda P. Landis Weldy. Children: Cheryl Martin, Dave, Mary Clasen, Ruth Fitz-Gerald; 15 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 19 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Wiebe, Vera Mae Yoder**, 85, Beatrice Neb., died Jan. 13, of complications from a stroke. Spouse: Edgar Gerhard Wiebe (deceased). Parents: Henry and Velma Miller Yoder. Children: Rebecca Sue Jobman, David Wendell, Deborah Jean Wiebe Wooding, Miriam Joan Wiebe Oliva; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at First Mennonite Church, Beatrice.

**Yoder, Lee I.**, 86, Fort Wayne, Ind., died Jan. 3, of complications of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Ruth E. Glick Yoder (deceased). Parents: Levi and Lydia Peachey Yoder. Children: Judith Yoder Alger, Jerry, Jess; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 12 at Church of the Good Shepherd, Leo, Ind..

**Yoder, Samuel L.**, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 23, 2012. Spouse: Lillian Zook Yoder. Parents: Levi M. and Gertrude Yoder Yoder. Child: John, Michael Lee. Funeral: Dec. 27 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

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## RESOURCES

**Living Faith: Embracing God's Callings** by Keith Graber Miller (Cascadia Publishing House, 2012, $12.95) explains why the primary Christian calling is to be a follower of Jesus Christ and what this entails for vocational life.

**The Apple Speaks: Poems** by Becca J.R. Lachman (Cascadia Publishing House, 2012, $12.95) brings to the surface questions and emotions rarely discussed regarding international missionary work, new marriage and straddling two worlds as a young feminist Mennonite writer.

**What's in the Blood: Poems** by Cheryl Denise (Cascadia Publishing House, 2012, $12.95) ponders what is sacred and what is spectacle and confronts desires that will not shoo. It faces fear and insecurity and acknowledges the effort it takes to stay in this world.

**A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions About Christian Care for Animals**, edited by Tripp York and Andy Alexis-Baker (Cascade Books, 2012, $23) includes 14 essays by authors from various denominational, ethnic and cultural backgrounds addressing questions Christians who advocate compassion toward other animals regularly face.

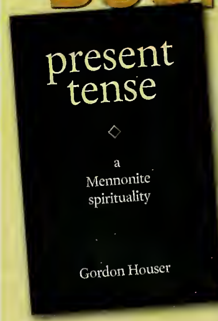
**Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations** by Sergius Bulgakov (Eerdmans, 2012, $48) documents what a life in Orthodoxy came to mean for Bulgakov on the tumultuous eve of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. It discusses myth, German idealist philosophy, negative theology and mysticism.

**Chasing the Divine in the Holy Land** by Ruth Everhart (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) recounts Everhart's experiences traveling in the Holy Land as one of several ministers taking part in a documentary about pilgrimage.

**Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World** by Raymond Rivera (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) encourages Christians to respond to God's call by ministering wherever God has placed them. Based on 45 years of pastoring inner-city churches, it challenges every Christian to think again about how their faith should lead to social action and defense of society's most vulnerable people.

**Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal** by April Yamasaki (Herald Press, 2012, $16.99) offers fresh ways to find everyday personal renewal. Each chapter explores a different spiritual practice—from classic disciplines of Scripture reading and prayer to less conventional approaches, such as having fun and living simply.

## Books from the editors

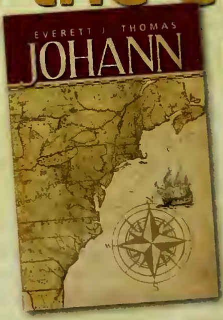


***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

$16.95

Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com

Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners



Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

$8.95

Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

*Johann* was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

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Calling all Mennonites with interest in East Africa! You're invited to attend **East Africa Connections 2013** at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, May 24-26, 2013. Speakers include recently returned MCC/EMM East Africa workers. Register by April 30. See https://www.facebook.com/EastAfricaConnections2013 for speaker and registration details.

**Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society** is seeking a three-quarter to full-time ***director of communications***. Primary responsibilities include editing and publishing the quarterly magazine *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* and marketing the activities of LMHS and the 1719 Hans Herr House. Details at www.lmhs.org/Home/About/Employment. Deadline: March 8.

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# Young adults do care about the church

**Jon Heinly** is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School.

> Young adults would much rather dream together about the future of the church than muddle around in debating divisive issues.

I hear many people bemoaning the many young adults who are leaving their churches. I want to tell a different story.

Two other young adults and I organized an event at James Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. We called it "Open Spaces: Young Adults Talking with Young Adults about the Future of the Church." We offered young adults good conversation, fellowship, free pizza and the chance for their voices to be heard. More than 80 young adults voluntarily spent their Saturday evening at a church talking about the church. Free pizza is great, but these young adults showed up for something more.

As planners, we hoped to have at least 30 people attend, which would have allowed for fruitful conversation. The actual turnout was so significant that I was forced to consider the meaning of what had happened. I don't want to be too hard on naysayers who give anecdotal evidence of young people leaving church. I see it happening among some of my friends, and I'm familiar with the work of people like David Kinnaman, who documents the attitudes of young adults towards the church in his book *UnChristian*. While these concerns should be taken seriously, a few observations from our January event should temper the pessimism that too often permeates conversations about young adults and church.

**First and foremost**, the presence of over 80 young adults at a Saturday night conversation about the future of the church tells us something. By showing up, those young adults delivered a clear message: "We are here, and we care about the church."

If the presence of those young adults at such an event was not enough, let me share a second observation about the content of the conversations. Carmen Horst, associate pastor of James Street Church, gave an effective explanation of Open Space Technology, which is a way of creating a safe and welcoming environment for specific conversations that fall under a general topic (i.e. the future of the church). The Open Space process and Carmen's explanation opened up the opportunity for conversations about controversial topics. She even gave freedom to talk about homosexuality and immigration, acknowledging these as especially contentious issues in today's church.

However, a fascinating thing happened. As individuals from the group suggested topics, no one brought up these highly divisive conversations. Instead, the conversations that emerged were hopeful and full of life and vision. In fact, the conversations embodied Lancaster Conference's 2020 Vision: We see new life. The topics named were these:

- Perfection—strived for, not achieved;
- Transitioning from youth to young adult;
- Evangelism;
- Staying relevant in the midst of changing society without compromising beliefs;
- Ethnic and gender diversity within congregational, conference and denominational leadership;
- Discipleship;
- Creativity in church;
- Living peacefully with others in the church in the midst of differences;
- Relationships among urban, suburban,; and rural congregations;
- Mennonite vs. church—what matters?
- Technology in the church.

**What does this mean?** It doesn't mean the young adults who participated in the conversation don't hold beliefs about the best way for the church to respond to challenges related to homosexuality and immigration. In fact, these young adults would probably engage rigorously around discussions of biblical interpretation or social and church policy regarding these topics. Instead, the topics suggested that evening say something much more profound—young adults imagine a church that can be relevant to a changing culture, and they would much rather dream together about the future of the church than muddle around in debating divisive issues.

My final observation from the evening is how the event has impacted the conference as a whole. I was amazed by the energetic buzz it created. People who were no longer young adults wanted to come and observe. Those who could not attend requested notes. Leadership bodies in Lancaster Conference wanted to hear reports of what had happened. Young adults even showed up early to the event, and many remained after it concluded to continue conversations.

As I hear fearful accounts of young adults leaving the church, I suggest an alternative narrative of the future. Perhaps by creating more open spaces, we will continue to see new life. TM

## FILM REVIEW

**Side Effects** (R) is a Hitchcockian thriller that begins by probing our culture's obsession with depression drugs and their side effects. The plot takes a sudden turn when Emily, who is on a new drug prescribed by her psychiatrist, kills her husband while sleepwalking. The plot twists further as guilt is transferred more than once. Director Steven Soderbergh deftly handles these twists but does not reach the depths Hitchcock did.—*Gordon Houser*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Entering the Wild: Essays of Faith and Writing** by Jean Janzen (Good Books, 2012, $11.95) is a memoir by the award-winning Mennonite poet. In exquisite prose she organizes her life's journey from Saskatchewan to California around images such as "Roar and Stillness" or "Pomegranate" or "The Fire, the Light." She traces the influence of her family and her faith on her vocation of writing. The book is a gem.—*gh*

**Laughter Is Sacred Space: The Not-So-Typical Journey of a Mennonite Actor** by Ted Swartz (Herald Press, 2012, $24.99) is another memoir, this from half of the well-known duo Ted & Lee. Swartz uses his humor and disarming honesty to tell of his journey from a traditional Mennonite upbringing to his vocation as an actor. Eminently readable, the book comes alive when Swartz discusses acting.—*gh*

**The Activist Impulse: Essays on the Intersection of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism**, edited by Jared S. Burkholder and David C. Cramer (Pickwick Publications, 2012, $49), collects 14 essays reflecting on how Anabaptism and Evangelicalism have intersected what challenges these traditions face.—*gh*

**Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal** by April Yamasaki (Herald Press, 2012, $16.99) offers stories and practical advice that not only show us how but make us want to pursue spiritual practices.—*gh*

# Why is *Downton Abbey* so popular?

Why are so many U.S. viewers, including many Mennonites, so enamored with *Downton Abbey*, which ended its third season on PBS last month?

This British period drama television series, created by Julian Fellowes, is set in a fictional Yorkshire country estate of Downton Abbey and depicts the aristocratic Crawley family and their servants in the post-Edwardian era.

Like the popular series *Upstairs Downstairs*, which aired on PBS over five seasons, 1971-75, *Downton* dramatizes the lives of the aristocratic family and of their servants, as well as their interactions.

Class is entrenched in British life, set according to what family one is born into, while Americans like to deny its reality, believing anyone can climb the ladder of success. *Downton* accentuates this difference at times with the presence of Cora, Countess of Grantham, an American heiress married to Robert, Earl of Grantham, whose estate is facing financial problems in season three.

Perhaps part of the appeal of *Downton* is this strange interplay of characters from the upper and lower classes.

But no, that's true of just about every British product on TV. And besides, the show is equally popular in Great Britain. In fact, it has become one of the most widely watched television shows in the world.

Critics, while lauding the show's acting, have not been unanimous in their accolades. In "Brideshead Regurgitated" (*The Atlantic*, January/February), James Parker calls *Downton* a "ludicrously popular aristosoap" and says its motto might be: "Footmen have feelings, too."

Parker goes on to call *Downton* "a harmless, anachronistic masque of manners, in which the players keep obediently to their roles and thereby gratify the innate conservatism of the audience."

Others include Simon Schama, the British historian, who complained in *Time* that *Downton* misrepresented how awful World War I was, along with other historical inaccuracies.

But *Downton* is not a documentary; it is, as Parker says, a soap opera. Fellowes has created characters that, on the one hand, tend to be all good, like Anna (a housemaid) or Bates (a valet) or Mrs. Hughes (a housekeeper), or pretty bad, like Thomas (a footman) or O'Brien (a lady's maid). On the other hand, he introduces some changes in certain characters as they face adversity and respond in either heroic or tragic ways.

The fact is, audiences love characters they can boo and those they can cheer. And while we're being manipulated by melodrama, we often don't care.

Mondays found Facebook posts commenting on the previous night's episode. The setting and the travails of these fictional characters from another era that is also quite fictional, despite its occasional historical signposts, take us away from our mundane or less interesting lives for a moment each week.

That's what entertainment does, whether it's a PBS soap or a football game or a concert or a murder mystery. Humans throughout history have sought diversions from their day-to-day lives.

Are such diversions bad? Not as long as we don't accept them as some kind of Truth (with a capital T).

*Downton* may not present an accurate sense of what life was really like on estates in post-Edwardian England or present realistic characters. But it's fun to watch, an enjoyable diversion before heading back to work. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

*(Continued from page 5)*

American followers of "Downton Abbey" would think of themselves as British subjects.

Adams and Villegas define Christendom as "a social arrangement in which Christianity penetrates the structure of power." I would be interested in learning which U.S. foreign or domestic policies are based on the gospel or the cry for justice of the Jewish prophets? How has Christian teaching permeated the economic and social power structures of the United States?

The besetting sin of "Christendom" has been the facile assumption that Christian faith is to be valued as the essential prop of western civilization and vice versa, so that both share an eternal destiny. The demise of that myth should be liberating for Christians.

As a historian by trade, I have noticed that every society, every empire, every ideology believes itself eternal, but the reality is that, just as you and I will eventually die, so every idea and every institution eventually fades into oblivion. There have been no exceptions, and there never will be. *—Richard K. MacMaster, Gainesville, Fla.*

## No Mennonite anarchists

I take issue with "A Mennonite Anarchist" (February). Part of the problem is that we cannot define words as we see fit. An anarchist is one who believes in anarchy: *an•ar•chy, noun, 1. A state of disorder due to absence or nonrecognition of authority. 2. Absence of government and absolute freedom of the individual, regarded as a political ideal. Synonyms: chaos, misrule.*

As Mennonites we may recognize the current government (despite what Romans 13:1-3 says) yet recognize the rule of another kingdom—one that places a much greater expectation on us than our current government.

To surrender to the rule of any kingdom is antithetical to what anarchists believe. We surrender everything to bow the knee to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords—something which no anarchist by definition would ever dream of doing.

I can agree with Mennonites being radical or revolutionary but never anarchist. Their whole cry was to do it for another kingdom.*—Jeff Linthicum, Berne, Ind.*

## Hubris and intolerance

I have an issue with the way Ervin Stutzman develops his thoughts in "God Sightings" (January). I see Stutzman moving from a healthy reaffirmation of faith—through confirming what we see as God at work in our world in the early paragraphs—to an unhealthy view of the place of the individual that can lead down a path of hubris and intolerance by the end. The transition comes in his reporting of Lois Barrett's research.

The first list of quotations he reports may depict "God as the actor or initiator in a situation," but the prominence of *me* and *I* in those quotations lacks the humility of submitting those feelings to the judgment of the larger community.

The second list of quotations are much more faithful to those wise admonitions throughout Scripture to test the sayings of the prophet and not be blown this way and that by any gust that comes. A wise and mature community will listen to those who say "the Holy Spirit gave me the words to say," weigh them and perhaps say, "Thank you, you are right" or, "Might you want to think about that a bit differently before you make the claim of God speaking through you?"

Perhaps the second list of quotations does not do enough to acknowledge the presence of God, but I think they do better reflect the place of the community of disciples' role in determining how we faithfully respond to God's presence among us.

In other words, it could be said that the first list of quotations elevates the individual and the second the community.

One of the hard-won pieces of wisdom people in our tradition learned over the generations is that the elevation of the individual judgment leads to schism and strife. A vibrant community of disciples listens in humility to the individual and brings a judgment about the value and import of those contributions and acts on them with gratitude and, if necessary, repentance. The much more important task of our community is learning how to listen in humility and learning how to make valid judgments on issues that may either uphold or challenge long-held wisdom. A community that learns these lessons and acts in a loving and merciful way truly bears witness to the power of God in our world.*—Douglas Horst, Evanston, Ill.*

## Church is called to higher standard

Re the Opinion piece by Ted Grimsrud ( January): His assessment and argument regarding the Mennonite Church USA teaching position, the Confession of Faith and "membership guidelines" may make sense to him and some others. It appears to me he is looking for a way for the church to welcome same-sex "loving," committed couples.

Regardless of what our church documents say or do not say, God has spoken in his Word. Scripture speaks clearly on this issue. Jude says there are godless men "who change the grace of God into a license for immorality." Jude names the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as "sexual immorality and perversion" (NIV). God's judgment is not exclusive to one sexual orientation.

There have been bold statements coming from current Democratic politicians (including our president) calling for equality and blessing of our "gay brothers and sisters."

The church is called to a higher standard. If we follow the lead of the world, we will come under God's judgment along with the world. We are called to love people, not to bless shameful behavior.*—Loren Miller, Aurora, Ore*

# God sightings at Christian Churches Together

*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*—Hebrews 13:2

In late January, I saw God at work in bringing a group of Christians to agreement on ways to better show hospitality to strangers who come to our communities. I was meeting in Austin, Texas, with other representatives of Christian Churches Together in the USA, a remarkably diverse gathering of Christians from around our country. CCT is a big tent, spreading its shade over dozens of faith communions that seldom talk to each other. We represent dozens of denominations and organizations from five large "families"—Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Evangelicals/Pentecostals and Historic Black Churches. Our diversity makes it all the more remarkable that we came to a relatively quick consensus on a statement regarding immigration. This could not have happened without the Spirit of God breathing on our meeting.

The CCT gathering could not have been more timely. The meeting and the topic were planned more than a year ago, so we could not have known that a "gang of eight" senators would publish a proposal for immigration reform and that President Obama would make a speech on immigration on the day we convened our meeting.

From the very first service, I noticed the signs of God's presence among us. After worshipping at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, we walked to the Central Presbyterian Church for a reception. The worship service and the gathering places were arranged to celebrate a historic moment—the signing of a "common agreement on mutual recognition of baptism" between the Roman Catholics and four Reformed communions.

**I felt like an onlooker**, since their agreement doesn't encompass the churches who celebrate believer's baptism. Nevertheless, my heart beat with theirs as they shared how God had been at work among them to bring about this remarkable moment. For them it was akin to the way Anabaptists felt in Stuttgart, Germany, when the Lutherans officially asked forgiveness for the persecution of Anabaptists. Only God can knock down the walls that have blocked the way to Christian unity for nearly 500 years.

There were many other poignant God-moments in our gathering, but I will mention only two. During the worship one afternoon, I sensed the sweet Spirit of God sweeping over the room. Led in worship by a gifted African-American Evangelical at the keyboard, we sang, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God." In those moments of adoration, it seemed that we as participants were transported beyond the earthly divisions that often keep Christians from truly worshipping together. We were one in spirit—the Orthodox bishops in formal black robes, the Salvation Army colonel in an officer's outfit, the Evangelical woman wearing jeans, the Lutheran bishops with their clerical collars, and the retired seminary professor from the Pentecostal Church of God—all of us singing, clapping and bowing before God.

**The other poignant event** took place as the Historic Black Church led the closing worship service. An African-American participant shared the good news that she had just received a phone call from her husband, announcing that he had achieved legal status in the United States. As a Haitian immigrant, he had faced the arduous task of proving that their marriage was legitimate, not simply arranged for his convenience as an immigrant. This couple's plight demonstrates one of many barriers people face when they seek to gain legal status in this country.

Our diversity makes it all the more remarkable that we came to a relatively quick consensus on a statement regarding immigration.

I am rejoicing in the work of a missional God who once showed up in the guise of a man named Jesus of Nazareth. Although he came to earth as a stranger, I am grateful to be among those who call him Savior and Lord. TM

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# In with the old

Everett J. Thomas

*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*—John 1:17 (KJV)

This is a most unfortunate translation of one of my favorite verses. Since the King James Version was used for so many generations, this translation framed the way English-speaking Christians have understood the two testaments. This translation implies something quite different from the original Greek meaning. It pits the Old Testament against the New Testament. It suggests there is no grace and truth in the Old Testament. It depreciates the law.

But here is the way my Greek-English interlinear Bible translates it: "Because the law through Moses was given, the grace and the truth through Jesus Christ became."

This rather wooden translation reveals the organic relationship between the old and new testaments. The grace and truth that came to us through Jesus Christ is the fruit of the law given to Israel by God through Moses. Grace and truth is the law's legacy, its posterity.

The grace and truth that came to us through Jesus Christ is the fruit of the law given by Moses.

So during this "Year of the Bible" (page 7), as Mennonite Church USA leaders have named it, I hope congregations will include the Old Testament in whatever plans are made to participate.

Why? I remember one of my seminary professors saying it's not really possible to understand the New Testament without understanding the Old. This is because many things in the New Testament "became" because of the law. The easiest way to see the relationship between the two testaments is to look for trajectories. Here is one example:

In Genesis 4, Lamech boasts to his wives, "I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

Generations after Cain murdered Abel, wanton violence is Cain's legacy. But the Old Testament law begins to moderate such excesses. So in Exodus 21, the law says, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

In Old Testament Hebrew, emphasis was shown by repeating a point with different words. In this case, repeating the point with seven examples demonstrates, with as much emphasis as possible, the limitations placed on vengeance.

So between Genesis and Exodus we see the beginnings of a shift. Then Jesus completes the trajectory with his commandment in Matthew 5: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile."

This is grace, and this is truth. Both "became" because God gave the law through Moses.

The Bible is not "flat" in the sense that every passage is equally important. The most important passages are those recounting Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection. Further, the Sermon on the Mount is one of the most important of Jesus' teachings.

But Jesus and his disciples did not have the New Testament. Scrolls full of the law, the prophets, psalms and wisdom literature (what we call the Old Testament) was their Bible. To fully understand how the disciples were faithful, we need to know the same Bible they did.—*ejt*

**Note:** The title of our page 8 column, Grace and Truth, is drawn from the John 1:17 text.

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# The Mennonite

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## Resurrected joy

April 2013
www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- Amish makeover of Christian fiction
- Heavenly citizenship
- Jesus and gun violence
- Documentaries take us to other worlds
- Welcome back

PHOENIX 2013

# URBAN Outfitters

## Interested in urban ministry? Want to connect with other Mennonites from urban settings?

Check out these two great Phoenix 2013 programs for adults and youth interested in all things urban.

## 1 Urban Youth Gathering

(for teens and young adults only)

**Wednesday, July 3 • 3:30–5 p.m.**

**A time of fun, fellowship, powerful spoken word and dynamic ministry through music.** Special guests will bring messages and music tailored to youth and young adults who operate in the theologically, racially and economically diverse context of the urban environment.

**Come to celebrate God's kingdom, network and meet new friends.**

**Guest speaker:** John Valenzuela (Coach Val) is a San Antonio native and church planter who began his ministry as a teen. In 2011, he left the education field after 27 years of teaching and coaching and entered ministry full time. Currently he serves as men's pastor at Community Bible Church in San Antonio.

**Special music:** Sean Slaughter—son of Integrity Music recording artist Alvin Slaughter—has traveled nationally and internationally for the last 12 years, bringing his brand of rap music and ministry to today's youth.

## 2 Successful Urban Churches:

### Best practices seminars

**Understanding your Identity,** Bishop L.W. Francisco III
**Missional Spirituality,** Bishop L.W. Francisco III
**Relating to a Diverse Christian Community,** Lon Hershey
**Stewardship and Church Management,** Nicole Francisco
**Church-to-Church Partnerships,** Heidi Aspinwall

CITIZENS of God's Kingdom
HEALED IN HOPE
PHOENIX
Mennonite Church USA convention 2013

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April 2013 | Volume 16, Number 4

*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

**Jesus references Lamech?**

Thanks to Everett Thomas for his editorial, "In with the Old" (February), noting that the New Testament can't be understood apart from the Hebrew Bible. I was especially delighted to see the reference to Lamech of Genesis 4, who sought security by upping Cain's sevenfold vengeance to 77 times. One New Testament connection not mentioned in the essay is the conversation between Peter and Jesus in Matthew 18, where Jesus extends Peter's inquiry about forgiveness from seven times to 77 times.

Might Jesus have had Lamech in mind when he said this? Forgiveness then becomes a kind of reverse revenge, an active way of undoing the deadend path Cain and Lamech initiated that finds its logical conclusion in weapons of mass destruction. It seems that Jesus saw this style of forgiveness as the only way forward out of the mounds of grievances accumulated over the millennia.—*Joel Miller, Cincinnati*

**Rule book or story?**

I was privileged to have received a copy of *The Mennonite* from my neighbor. Even though I am not a Mennonite, I felt that I must congratulate you for printing J. Denny Weaver's article "Rule Book or Story?" (March). The article is outstanding. Articles like this are valuable in this day when Christians are being divided due to a "literalistic rule book" reading of the Bible. The Bible is a gift to us—the church. If we claim to be the church of today, then we must continue to grow in our understanding and use of the biblical narrative. It does not mean the Bible will change. It means that we will grow. We will gain new insights. We will change.

As a retired Lutheran minister, I am excited to see that both our churches are moving forward and will have much to learn from each other in the future. With much appreciation—*George E. Keck, Harlesyville, Pa.*

This note is long overdue. Time and time again I am impressed by the quality of articles in *The Mennonite* as it encourages dialogue in the broader church setting. Many articles have touched me over the years, and many have shown how much the Mennonite/Anabaptist church has changed since I started relating to the Mennonite church 30 years ago.

One of your most recent articles, "Rule Book or Story" by J. Denny Weaver, lays out a wonderful understanding of the Living Word as we try to be faithful to the gospel in our own time.

Years ago, I heard an excellent explanation by Marion Bontrager of why Mennonites don't believe in a flat Bible—meaning the emphasis starts with Jesus and everything else flows from his life, teaching and example. I knew at that moment that my theology was and is Anabaptist.—*Gary T. Guthrie, Nevada, Iowa*

**What is wealth creation?**

The news story "Wealth, Capitalism Focus of AMBS' Pastors Week" used the language of wealth creation and creating wealth. I confess to being perplexed in my effort to understand what is meant by the language and troubled when I think I do get the idea. Wealth, by most of the definitions I can find, means the value of things, or things with value. But the language of wealth creation does not seem to be used of manufacturing or creating things of value. It is used rather of the process by which individuals amass, collect, accrue and gain wealth. But I would call this redistributing (toward oneself) wealth, not creating wealth. Why is it called "wealth creation"?—*John Stoner, Akron, Pa.*

**AMBS responds**

At Pastors Week, Kim Tan's teaching in its full manifestation described a relationship to wealth that demonstrates the transformative power of God's vision for Jubilee in our day: wealth used to alleviate poverty, release captives and restore the earth. Tan views business development ("wealth creation") as a key to empowering the poor. Businesses that justly "create wealth" generate assets that can be invested in the community, education and infrastructure.

I encourage you to listen to Tan's presentations, beginning perhaps with his personal story in *Jubilee Today*. After listening also to his biblical interpretation originally inspired by John Howard Yoder, take in his *Experiments in Jubilee*. His talks are available under *Presentations* at www.ambs.edu/news-events/iTunesU.cfm.—*Sara Wenger Shenk, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary president*

**Confession of faith and marriage**

Ted Grimsrud's Opinion article (January) reminds me of the time I was asked by my mother if I hit my little sister. "No, I didn't hit her," was my reply. The truth was I kicked her.

Grimsrud is correct in saying, "The actual confession of faith does not in fact mention homosexuality." What it does say is, "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. ... According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship."

This means that right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship of one man and one woman. This precludes all premarital, extramarital and homosexual sexual activity.—*Gary Blosser, Blandon, Pa.*

**MCC and the NRA**

The article by Everett Thomas about the National Rifle Association and Mennonite Central Committee (News Briefs, March) may have needed some fact checking. Unfortunately, the NRA has removed the cited list so it cannot be checked. My search of the NRA site found a 2004 list of "antigun lobbying organizations" did include MCC. The list seemed to be alphabetical, and MCC just was not able to get a top scary rating.

The "12 Most Threatening People (sic)" may exist, but it seems unlikely that MCC was in the top 12. (If they are, then that's a lot of bang for the buck). If you can find the list, please send it or a link to the list to me. It might be helpful to check the facts before you hype. —*Floyd M. Mast, Greenwood, Del.*

In the March issue you refer to the article in *Mother Jones* that included MCC on a list of the "12 Most Threatening People" to the NRA. *Mother Jones* was actually satirizing the NRA. MCC was indeed on a long list of enemies made by the NRA, but *Mother Jones* culled out some really innocuous names on the list and then published them with jokes under the title of "12 Most Threatening." About MCC they said, "You know who else had a central committee?"—*J. Denny Weaver, Madison, Wis.*

**Bobby socks and nylons**

I was happy to see Marilyn Miller as our latest "cover girl" (March). To show us all how far we have come, I recount the following true story:

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Although Easter Sunday is on March 31, we hope that by mailing our April issue early enough, most readers will receive it before Easter. Regardless, the Easter season stretches through April and on until Pentecost.

We commissioned the cover story by pastor Anita Amstutz, who drew from her winter experiences at a monastery and with a hermit who lived nearby (page 12). The experience reminded her of another woman with a teacher.

"Perhaps I was Mary Magdalene in the garden," Amstutz writes, "who in a moment knew that the risen presence of Jesus was suddenly there before her, a radiant presence of resurrected Love, filling her up with renewed hope and joy."

We also asked writer and editor Valerie Weaver-Zercher to draw from her research about the growing popularity of Amish romance novels (page 16). In it she notes that many Mennonites "both consume and produce" these novels.

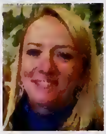
Drawing from his experiences with undocumented workers in South Korea, Hyun Hur wrote the second in a series of Bible studies that focus on the texts for the Phoenix convention in July (page 23).

Also related to the Phoenix convention: The news section begins with one of the decision-points delegates there will have: whether to make MHS (Mennonite Health Services) Alliance the fifth agency of Mennonite Church USA.

April is the month in which Mennonite Church USA agencies in Elkhart, Ind., will mark the one-year anniversary of the new office building dedication (page 36). Associate editor Gordon Houser provides an update about the building's occupancy, financing and the anticipated LEED (energy-efficiency) certification level. —*Editor*

## Goshen College student dies in murder-suicide

GOSHEN, Ind.—Millicent Morros, a 48-year-old Goshen College student who had recently become a paralegal at a law firm, was gunned down in broad daylight March 4 while walking to work in downtown Goshen.



The gunman, who was the victim's ex-boyfriend, then turned the gun on himself and committed suicide, according to Goshen police.

John Eric Haitsma, 51, a former police officer and Goshen business owner, shot and killed Morros after a brief discussion between the two.

The police investigation and witness statements at the scene confirmed that Haitsma and Morros, both of Goshen, were known to one another, having previously been in a relationship that reportedly ended earlier this year. Morros was originally from Niles, Mich.

According to Goshen College staff, Morros had been enrolled in Goshen's adult degree program since fall 2011, where she had excelled and was named to the fall 2012 dean's list.

Goshen president James Brenneman says Morros was due to graduate in May with a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership through the adult education program.—*adapted from a March 5* Goshen News *article*

## Eight villages face expulsion in firing zone

SOUTH HEBRON HILLS, West Bank—Imagine your neighborhood was declared a firing range. You are threatened with forced evacuation. Demolition orders are issued for your home, your church and the school your children attend. Your land will cease to belong to you, and your livestock will be removed.

This is what 1,000 Palestinians living in Masafer Yatta face. Twelve villages lie within the area Israel claims as firing zone 918, according to Christian Peacemaker Teams workers.

Residents of four of the villages have been told they are excluded from the attempted eviction because the ammunition being used by soldiers training for war near their homes is not live. The 1,000 residents of the other eight villages, half of them children, could lose their homes, schools, crops and livestock, their mosques and their way of life within the year.

On Jan. 16, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel filed a petition on their behalf, and the Israeli court granted a temporary order preventing forcible transferring of the families pending a further decision.

The temporary order is all that is preventing the forced removal of the families living in Masafer Yatta.

During the past month, soldiers have repeatedly driven large vehicles across planted fields, confiscated residents' cars, cameras, phones and livestock, landed helicopters next to dwellings and livestock, and threatened families with imminent eviction and destruction of their homes. Children in the region find unexplored ordnance as they walk to and from school, and families are awakened during the night by the sound of repeated firing and by military helicopters and jeeps driving near their homes.—*CPT*

Bluffton University

### Bluffton 'BaseBald'

Joel Unzicker of Goshen, Ind., is among roughly 40 Bluffton (Ohio) University baseball players and coaches who had their heads shaved Feb. 27 as part of a "BaseBald" fundraiser for the St. Baldrick's Foundation, which funds research for potential childhood cancer cures. Teresa Marshall, a stylist at The Curling Iron in Bluffton, did the honors for Unzicker. Since December 2012, in solidarity with young cancer victims, the Bluffton players and coaches had raised more than $7,900 in the second annual event for St. Baldrick's, a Monrovia, Calif.-based charity.
—*Bluffton University*

## IBA plans 25th anniversary event in September

ELKHART, Ind.—Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute) is planning to celebrate 25 years of serving Spanish-language learners on Labor Day weekend. IBA participants will gather near Talladega, Ala., for their annual learning and fellowship retreat and will mark the 25-year milestone of the program. They will be joined by past directors, Marco Güete and Gilberto Flores. Currently Rafael Barahona is the director and Violeta Ajquejay the associate director.

Begun in 1988 by the Hispanic Ministries Department of the former General Conference Mennonite Church, IBA's primary objective is to provide educational resources that promote Anabaptist theological and biblical training for Spanish-speaking leaders.

IBA participants study at teaching centers in a local church that has a volunteer tutor assigned to it. There are more than 50 teaching centers serving more than 300 students. More than 1,000 students have earned certificates or diplomas from the program, which takes about two and a half years to complete. IBA graduates serve as leaders primarily in local settings but are also active in church planting and area conference and churchwide leadership.

IBA functions under the umbrella of Mennonite Education Agency.—*IBA*

*—compiled by Gordon Houser*

John Fawcett for MCC

## Jordanians welcome refugees from Syria

Omar, left, a Syrian refugee, met with J. Daryl Byler, Mennonite Central Committee representative, at the Za'atari refugee camp in early March. Omar and his brother brought their families, their father and their 88-year-old mother to the camp. (Omar's real name was not used for security purposes). During the past two years, violent conflict in Syria has forced more than 400,000 refugees across their country's border into Jordan.—*MCC*

## Revised edition of *The Amish* released

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—A newly updated edition of John Hostetler's classic introduction, *The Amish*, has been released.

The late John Hostetler's book on Amish customs, beliefs and practices has sold over 760,000 copies in earlier editions. The new edition, with all new photographs, was revised by recognized Amish scholar Steven M. Nolt and by John's daughter, Ann E. Hostetler.

The new edition was expanded to 48 pages with full-color photos, taken by photographers respectful of Amish concerns about images. The original booklet published in 1952 has been popular in tourist locations and on Amazon.com. John Hostetler was also the author of *Amish Society*, published by Johns Hopkins Press. The book will sell for $8.99. —*MennoMedia*

## Goshen College radio station named best again

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College's student-operated radio station WGCS 91.1 The Globe (www.globeradio.org) has been named 2013 Best College Station in the Nation and Indiana's Radio School of the Year.

This is the second time the college radio station has received the top national award in three years from the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System (IBS), making it the first college to be a repeat winner in the competition, which is against every college and university in the country of every size. Last year, the station was a runner-up for the top award.

The station's general manager, Jason Samuel, and a group of his students who work at the station were on hand to win the award at the 73rd Annual Conference of the IBS in New York City on March 2. The Globe beat out two other finalists for the top award: William Patterson University (11,400 students) and DePaul University (25,000 students). In addition, students won six national awards and were finalists in 20 categories. IBS is the oldest college radio association in the country.

And on Feb. 15, for the second consecutive year, Goshen College earned the state titles of both Radio School of the Year and Television School of the Year in the 2013 Indiana Association of School Broadcasting's college broadcasting competition.—*Goshen College*

## New Master of Divinity with distance option will launch in the fall

ELKHART, Ind.—A new Master of Divinity program will begin at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in August, giving students options for study from a distance as well as on campus.

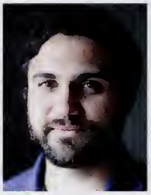
The new program has received accreditation approval from the Association of Theological Schools. Approval from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association is pending.

MDiv Connect, the distance option, includes online courses and hybrid courses, which involve both online and on-campus learning. Students entering the program will come to AMBS for orientation in August. Then over the course of five and a half years, they should plan to make two annual week-long visits to campus for classes, spiritual formation and vocational discernment.

MDiv Campus, the option for residential students, builds on long-standing strengths of AMBS.

The new MDiv, in both forms, will comprise 80 credit hours, a reduction of 10 from previous requirements. More interdisciplinary courses make this shift possible and allow students to better integrate understanding and skills for ministry. The program also requires cross-cultural studies and two internships.—*AMBS*

# Church as prayer



**Isaac Villegas** is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

When we get together for church, we pray. The worship leader invokes the Holy Spirit with an opening litany, another person offers a congregational prayer on our behalf, the preacher prays before the sermon, various people speak joys and concerns during an open time of sharing and, finally, the worship leader returns for a prayer of benediction before we depart.

We pray for the world, for the needs in our community, in our neighborhoods, in our homes. We ask for the peace of Christ and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. We pray against oppression and violence, against sickness and depression, against the insidious powers of sin and death in all their manifestations.

There's so much to pray against—and for.

"We pray for those who have lost hope and for those who have gained hope this week," I remember a church member, Rebecca Buchanan, saying one week as she led our congregation in prayer.

> Prayer is a summons to remain awake to the pain of others, to the pain from which I would shield myself.

**Church is a corporeal prayer.** The Spirit of God breathes through us as we pray, enlivening us, drawing us into the life of God as we become the body of Christ, "flesh of Christ's flesh and bone of his bone," as Menno Simons wrote.

In prayer, we yield ourselves to the Spirit, who weaves our lives into the identity of Jesus Christ, the one whose life is an embodied prayer, a ministry that calls upon God to redeem and restore, to inaugurate an era of healing and salvation, of peace.

Jesus lives out a prayer for heaven to fill the earth, a prayer against the demonic forces of hell that ravage creation. His preaching and healing, his walking and speaking—all that he says and does—comes together as a single prayer for God's will to be done. "Thy will be done," we hear Jesus say in the garden of Gethsemane as his hope for heavenly life on earth is threatened with crucifixion.

This is the moment of Jesus' life I am drawn into during worship. Church, for me, is the body of Jesus in prayer, there in Gethsemane, staring with horror into the overwhelming violence yet refusing to escape from the suffering of the world. In the garden, Jesus invites his friends, he invites us, into his posture of vigilance: "I am deeply grieved, even to death," Jesus says. "Remain here, and keep awake."

Prayer is a summons to remain awake to the pain of others, to the pain from which I would shield myself if I could live as I wanted, caught up in routines of work and rest and pleasure. Worship draws me into the passion of Christ as the people at church pray us into the agony of the world, into the pain and sorrow of friends and strangers, into solidarity with the oppressed, into the presence of Jesus—the one whose afflictions, as the apostle Paul wrote, are completed in the suffering of human flesh.

Recently, during worship, someone shared how, when he opened the newspaper that morning, he saw a picture of children in Gaza, surrounded by gray smoke, surrounded by destruction, terrorized by adult war.

"My heart breaks for them," he said as he cried, "Lord, have mercy."

With this prayer, among others, we let Christ's life flow through us, a life of protest against the forces of death. We let Christ's agony become our agony, God's pain our pain.

**To be afflicted with God's compassion** arouses in us the power of hope. Not cheap hope. Not escapist hope. But hope engendered by the anguish of the world as it awakens us to God's pain; as the theologian Dorothee Soelle writes, to experience God's pain in the suffering world is to touch "the power of life within pain, which is the biological protest of life against sickness and death."

In our prayers of protest, of pain, we feel the life of God flow through our church body, life that sustains our hope—that God will hear our prayers and answer by restoring life, reviving creation, redeeming our world.

*This column is adapted from an article for the spring 2013 issue of* Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology, *www.mennovision.org.*

# And when they shall ask

By all accounts the story of the Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia is a remarkable success. Since its humble beginnings in 1951 with the baptism of 10 believers, MKC has become the largest national conference in the Mennonite World Conference family, numbering 225,000 baptized members.

During a recent visit to Ethiopia, I witnessed firsthand some of the reasons behind the church's astonishing growth: gifted leadership, dynamic worship, investment in evangelism, active youth programs, a creative prison ministry, innovative relief and development projects, an extensive curriculum for discipling new believers, and a thriving Bible college dedicated to training future leaders. Today MKC enjoys a national reputation as a teaching church, committed to discipleship and reconciliation.

But amid this remarkable vitality, almost no one in leadership seemed interested in MKC history. "It's just not a priority for us," one church leader told me. On the surface, I can understand why. Though this is changing, Ethiopia is still largely an oral culture: memory is woven into the stories of ordinary conversation, not something to be fixed in print. Moreover, the Orthodox Church—whose culture and rituals continue to dominate Ethiopian life—is closely associated with tradition. For an evangelical, charismatic church like MKC, what matters most is the urgency of sharing the gospel in the present moment. History suggests the dead weight of the past.

**I understand the arguments**, but I'm not convinced. First, as I learned to know more about the MKC, it occurred to me that a significant group of church leaders is now passing from the scene. The generation who knew the missionaries in the 1950s and 1960s assumed key positions of leadership during the era of persecution (1977-1991), then oversaw the dynamic transformation of the church during the past 20 years, are now dying. When an elderly person dies in an oral culture, it is as if an entire library has burned. Their stories need to be honored and preserved.

Second, newcomers who join the MKC need training in biblical literacy and discipleship. But they also need to know something about the character and identity of the group they are joining. Since most converts to MKC come out of Orthodox or Muslim contexts, they bring with them a deep sense of history. When they join the MKC, they need to find their anchoring in a new historical identity.

But most fundamentally, attentiveness to history is evangelical. The God we worship is known to us not only as a personal Savior but as the Lord of history. The stories of the Bible—along with the account of Pentecost and the apostles; the emergence of the Catholic Church, the Orthodox tradition, the Reformation and Anabaptism; and the witness of many other renewal movements since then, including the MKC—are all part of a grand story of God's revelation to humanity. The MKC story matters because it bears witness to the larger drama of God's faithfulness in history.

**While browsing in a bookstore** on the last day of my visit, I had a conversation with a friendly young man behind the counter. As we talked, Wondosson casually mentioned that he and his youth group at the Debub MKC in Addis had just completed a video project honoring the life of Beyene Mulatu, an elderly leader in their congregation. One of the first Ethiopians to earn a doctorate, Beyene returned from a promising career in the West to devote his entire life in service to the MKC. Wondosson's youth group had saved money to rent a digital camera. Then they conducted a series of intensive interviews and spent nearly a year editing the footage to create a 90-minute documentary telling Beyene's story. When the video was first screened to the congregation last December, Wondosson said, the entire congregation was in tears. Even now, though he had worked on the project for months and seen the movie many times, Wondosson said he could not help crying when he watched the movie and was reminded of Beyene's faithful witness.

I thank God for young people like Wondosson who are hungry for their history.

In Joshua, we read that when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, God commanded them to build a stone pyre. Why? So that generations later, when the children asked about the meaning of the stones, the story of God's faithfulness would be remembered (Joshua 4:21-24).

What stories are you telling your children? What stone pyres has your congregation erected? Could history be a source of evangelism? TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

The MKC story matters because it bears witness to the larger drama of God's faithfulness in history.

# Are machines taking over our work?

This may sound like the question a Luddite might ask. But several articles recently have addressed the fact that machines are doing more and more work that humans have done, and these articles ask, Is this good or bad—or a mixture?

I read a novel not long ago that mentioned "the Singularity," the moment when a computer "wakes up, becomes self-aware, gains consciousness." This is also the premise behind the *Terminator* movies. But I'm not addressing that—not yet.

In a Jan. 24 Associated Press story, "Imagining a Future When Machines Have All the Jobs," Paul Wiseman refers to the book *The Lights in the Tunnel* by Martin Ford. Ford describes a nightmare scenario, Wiseman writes: "Machines leave 75 percent of American workers unemployed by 2089. Consumer spending collapses. Even those who are still working slash spending and save everything they can; they fear their jobs are doomed, too. As people lose work, they stop contributing to Social Security, potentially bankrupting the retirement system."

"Smarter machines will make life better and increase wealth in the economy," Ford says. The challenge "is to make sure the benefits are shared when most workers have been supplanted by machines." He recommends "imposing massive taxes on companies, which would be paying far less in wages thanks to automation, and distributing the proceeds to those left unemployed by technology."

In a Feb. 2 *New York Times* article, "Raging (Again) Against the Robots," Catherine Rampell cautions against alarmist views of new technology. She recounts some of the dire warnings over the centuries against automation that takes over human labor and notes how laborers welfare has improved in the past 200 years, due largely to new technology, something Ford does not deny.

She goes on to quote economists who range from an optimistic Joel Mokyr, an economic historian at Northwestern University, to a more pessimistic Erik Brynjolfsson, an economics professor at M.I.T. and co-author of the book *Race Against the Machine*.

Mokyr says: "Every invention ever made caused some people to lose jobs. … In a good society, when this happens, they put you out to pasture and give you a golf club and a condo in Florida. In a bad society, they put you on the dole, so you have just enough not to starve, but that's about it."

Brynjolfsson argues that we have reached a sort of inflection point in productivity growth and that "any job that can be reduced to an algorithm will [lead] to the displacement of workers in industries as diverse as retail and radiology."

In the March issue of *The Atlantic*, Jonathan Cohn's article "The Robot Will See You Now" shows how technology is replacing human workers in health care.

Cohn writes: "IBM's Watson—the same machine that beat Ken Jennings at *Jeopardy*—is now churning through case histories at Memorial Sloan-Kettering, learning to make diagnoses and treatment recommendations."

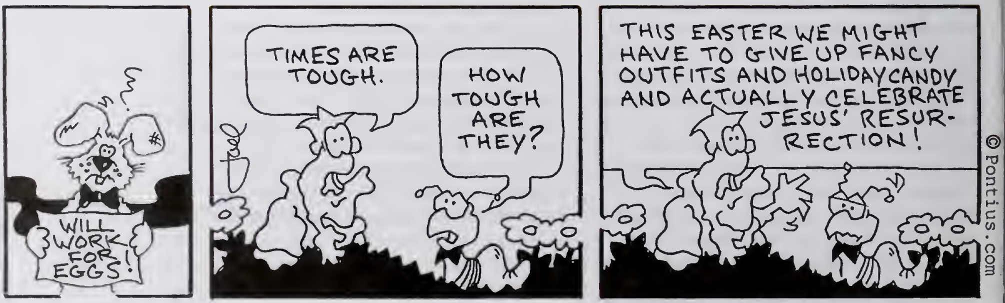
This practice is becoming widespread. Cohn notes that "in Brazil and India, machines are already starting to do primary care, because there's no labor to do it. They may be better than doctors. Mathematically, they will follow evidence—and they're much more likely to be right."

And one doctor says he doesn't think physicians "will be seeing patients as much in the future." They'll become "super-quality-control officers."

These changes will likely be good for some and bad for others. Rampell writes: "Historically, the children of displaced workers have benefited from mechanization, but the displaced workers themselves have often been permanently passé."—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


WILL WORK FOR EGGS!
TIMES ARE TOUGH.
HOW TOUGH ARE THEY?
Joel
THIS EASTER WE MIGHT HAVE TO GIVE UP FANCY OUTFITS AND HOLIDAY CANDY AND ACTUALLY CELEBRATE JESUS' RESURRECTION!
© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “The top 100 billionaires added $240 billion to their wealth in 2012—enough to end world poverty four times over.”
>
> —statement from Oxfam International calling for the end of extreme global poverty by 2025

## Eat like a Mennonite

In a piece with the above title, Florence Williams writes in the *New York Times* (Jan. 18) about the need to reduce “phthalates (found in some plastics and added to products like lotions to bind fragrances), triclosan (an antibacterial ingredient in many soaps, toothpastes and cutting boards) and bisphenol A (or BPA, a plastic-hardener and epoxy additive that may affect children’s brain development and that some believe may be linked to breast and prostate cancers).” She refers to a study published in 2010 that found that an “effective way to reduce urinary phthalate levels was to live meatless in a Buddhist temple for five days. A study recently published in the journal *NeuroToxicology* found that pregnant women in Old Order Mennonite communities, which eschew many modern conveniences, had urinary BPA levels one-fourth the national median. Those Mennonites eat more fresh food than the rest of us and make their own dairy products, but they also buy fewer consumer goods, which can be additional sources of BPA. The chemical is found in dental fillings, eyeglass lenses and CDs, among other products.” —*New York Times*

**1%**

of all Medicaid patients account for 25 percent of all spending by Medicaid. —*Pacific Standard*

## Fewer children dying

According to United Nations statistics published last September, 700,000 fewer children died in 2011 than the year before. And in 2010, the toll was 200,000 lower than 2009. Since 1970, the children’s death count has dropped by more than half, while at the same time, the world’s population nearly doubled.

What has produced this happy news? A good deal can be traced to international efforts to improve health, nutrition and economic development. Child health is an important building block for long-term success, says Melinda Gates of the Bill& Melinda Gates Foundation. “Children surviving and staying healthy means more children in school and able to learn, which in turn means productive workers who can drive sustained economic growth,” she says.—*The Marketplace*

## Catholic, Reformed agree on baptism

Leaders of Catholic and Reformed churches have signed an agreement to recognize each other's sacraments of baptism, a public step toward unity among groups that are often divided by doctrine. Signers represented the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Roman Catholic Church and United Church of Christ.—*Religion News Service*

## Capital punishments on the wane

Though the number of death-row inmates executed in 2012 remained unchanged from 2011 at 43, death penalty opponents said the year still showed capital punishment is on the wane. Some states that have had relatively high numbers of executions in the past executed no one last year, or issued no new death sentences.—*Religion News Service*

## Guns and money

As late as the mid-1970s the National Rifle Association (founded in 1871) focused on hunting, conservation and marksmanship. But at its annual meeting in 1977 it was taken over by radical gun rights activists, who reshaped the group’s orientation. The old guard had plans to move headquarters to Colorado, but the new leaders decided that the real action was in Washington. Today the NRA is arguably the most powerful lobbying organization in the country. William J. Vizzard, a retired Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms official, says the NRA has no interest in compromise. “They’re not interested in fixing things. They want to stir things up; the more members they get, the more money they make.”—*Christian Century*

**0.1%**

of the world’s population lives in Israel.

**25%**

of world stories in the *New York Times* last year mentioned Israel.—*Pacific Standard*

### Numbers to ponder

- Percentage by which a male college graduate’s hourly wage was higher than a female’s in 1979: **11**
- Percentage by which a male college graduate’s hourly wage was higher than a female’s in 2011: **24**
- Percentage of its energy demand that Denmark has pledged to fulfill with renewable resources by 2050: **100**
- Percentage that Germany has pledged to fulfill using renewables by 2030: **50**
- Percentage that the United States has pledged to fulfill using renewables: **0**

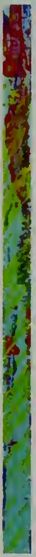
—*Yes! Magazine*

Easter blooms in a visit to a monastery in the desert of New Mexico.

# Resurrected joy

by Anita Amstutz

© Ken Gingerich



*Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, "Abba, as far as I can I say my little office [prayer], I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace, and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?" Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands toward heaven. His fingers became like 10 lamps of fire, and he said to him, "If you will, you can become all flame."*—a saying from the Desert Mothers and Fathers

I went to the desert to pray. It was the bleak midwinter of January. The brothers of the Benedictine Monastery in Northern New Mexico were welcoming and warm as always. But the landscape was naked. The frozen air singed my nose hairs. I had been here in the summer, when the high desert was blooming and the birds were thick as thieves. But the austere beauty of the winter landscape took my breath away. The sheer orange cliffs were dusted with snow, and the Chama River was a stunning, diamond-encrusted sheet of glass. Every day I walked for miles up the canyon with the sun on my face, singing me home to my soul.

I came to sit in the silence and song, among the brothers who chanted the Scriptures no less than seven times a day. Sometimes at night, after evening prayers, I walked out into the black velvet of the night, the starfields above me, the coyote's haunting wail like surroundsound. I was startled into wakefulness and alertness in my heart, a receptivity to the Divine that I often don't feel in my daily hubbub.

Cynthia Bourgeault, in her book *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart*, writes about Jesus as "Moshel Meshalim," the teacher of wisdom, the one who awakened us to the kingdom of heaven that is within us (Luke 17:21). She writes, "To realize that the kingdom is here and now is really a matter of developing a kind of X-ray vision—looking through the physical appearance of things and responding directly to their innermost aliveness and quality." This ability of the heart to see beneath the surface of how things seem to be and know the presence of Christ in all things, even suffering, begins the sacred alchemy of transforming and attuning the heart to the very nature of Christ's love.

**I caught a glimpse of it** in the heart of creation—here at the monastery, where people came to pray in the desert.

Father John, the hermit who lives up the canyon, met with me one day. I had come here, wrestling with the God of Jacob and Rachel, struggling to keep the flame of love in my heart alive and burning amid the troubles of the world. It was hard not to be troubled as I heard the news of the day—ongoing Palestinian occupation, Afghani children freezing to death in refugee camps, a hydraulic fracturing epidemic in this country and the massive profits of a fossil fuel industry, the warming global climate and unpredictable weather patterns, the deadly flu, children massacred by assault weapons. Many days I felt as though the administrivia of ministry was not meeting the desperate needs of the world.

I first met Fr. John in the summertime. I was doing my daily labor, digging up weeds in the yard where the brothers grow their own hops for the Belgian style Monks Ale they brew ("ora et labora" is a Latin phrase meaning "prayer and work," instituted by St. Benedict as necessary for a balanced life). Fr. John was tending the wee

▶

> Prayer is the way to fan the flames of love for a suffering world and keep one's heart alive with God's grace.

sprouting hops. As our conversation unfolded over the water jug—throughout the sweaty heat of the morning—I suddenly felt as though I were the woman at the well, standing before the real deal, being offered living water for my thirsty soul. Or perhaps I was Mary Magdalene in the garden, who in a moment knew that the risen presence of Jesus was suddenly there before her, a radiant presence of resurrected Love, filling her up with renewed hope and joy.

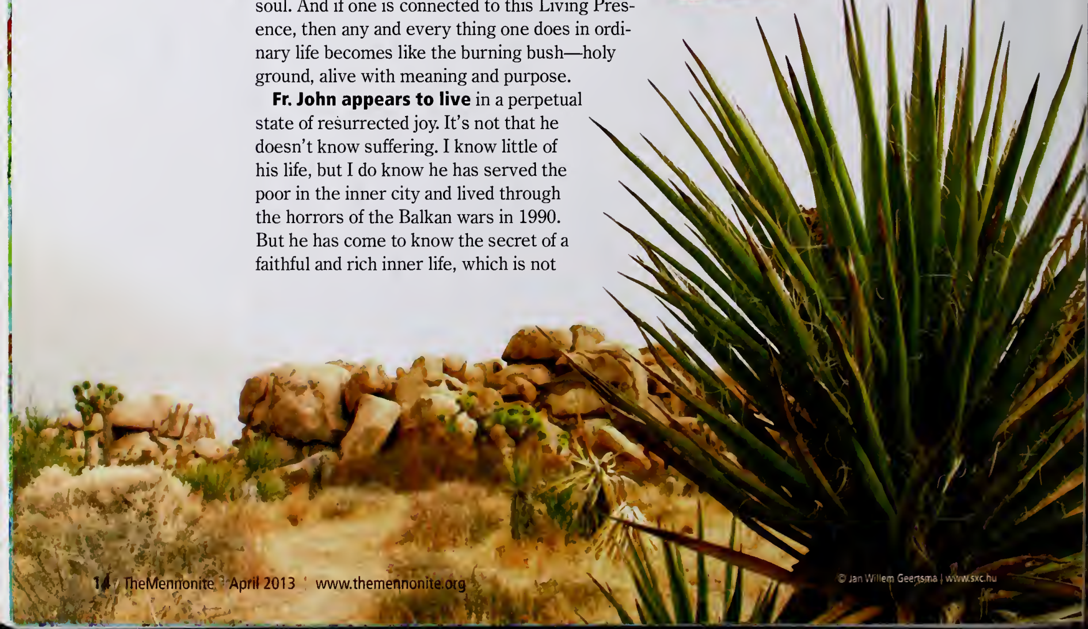
This particular day, Father John told me of the story of Abba Lot and Abba Joseph, from the desert fathers: "If you will, you can become all flame."

Fr. John invited me (again) to deepen my prayer life. No matter who you are, where you are called, what you are doing, he reminded me that prayer is the way to fan the flames of love for a suffering world and keep one's heart alive with God's grace. For Fr. John, prayer isn't just a laundry list of things that God can do for him. Prayer is communion, a daily, ongoing intimacy and relationship with the creator of one's body, mind and soul. And if one is connected to this Living Presence, then any and every thing one does in ordinary life becomes like the burning bush—holy ground, alive with meaning and purpose.

**Fr. John appears to live** in a perpetual state of resurrected joy. It's not that he doesn't know suffering. I know little of his life, but I do know he has served the poor in the inner city and lived through the horrors of the Balkan wars in 1990. But he has come to know the secret of a faithful and rich inner life, which is not predicated on the news of the day. These days, he lives in a small hermitage, helping the brothers with repairs and other handyman services, meeting people throughout the day with his radiant and authentic countenance. He is turbo charged by the love of the Resurrected Christ. Those who meet him are awakened, stirred to life by the vibrancy and living color of his being.

And so, in the depths of my winter monastery visit, Easter was beginning to bloom, far before the snow melted and the land sent up green shoots. Resurrection was afoot, in spite of the troubled world I would return to. A world that seemed so very far beyond this cloistered place but was really close at hand. A world longing to be filled by yet one more flame of love.

*Anita Amstutz is pastor of Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.*



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# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Anne Berry** is visiting assistant professor of graphic design, faculty advisor for Lakehouse Design (a student-run design firm) and faculty advisor for BFA candidates, all at the University of Notre Dame, Ind. She serves on the worship commission at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind., and is a board member of Goshen Farmers Market. She has served as assistant professor of art and co-director of the Hershberger Gallery at Goshen College.

I'm encouraged by other women leaders who openly acknowledge the difficulties they sometimes face.
—Anne Berry

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**

I've had numerous female mentors over the years, my sister among them. She and I share similar perspectives as far as gender, religious affiliation and ethnicity are concerned. Consequently, having someone to talk candidly with regarding the various facets of my identity has been important for developing the kind of confidence necessary to lead.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**

I mentor many young women who have the potential to be church leaders. I continually oversee students who are connected to faith communities. So, though we may not think of artists and designers as traditional church leaders, these creative women still have important contributions to make in their respective congregations.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**

I had few connections when I started my design career and have subsequently tried to build some of those bridges for my students. One former student (from Uganda) hadn't used a computer prior to college but will soon be graduating with an MFA in graphic design from the same program I did. I would like to think I helped make that journey easier for her.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**

Self-doubt and anxiety are two of the biggest internal challenges to overcome. Opening myself up to criticism, knowing that I may fall short of expectations in a public way—particularly as a woman of color—can be daunting. Institutional racism also means I have to confront prejudice and stereotypes that others project onto me.

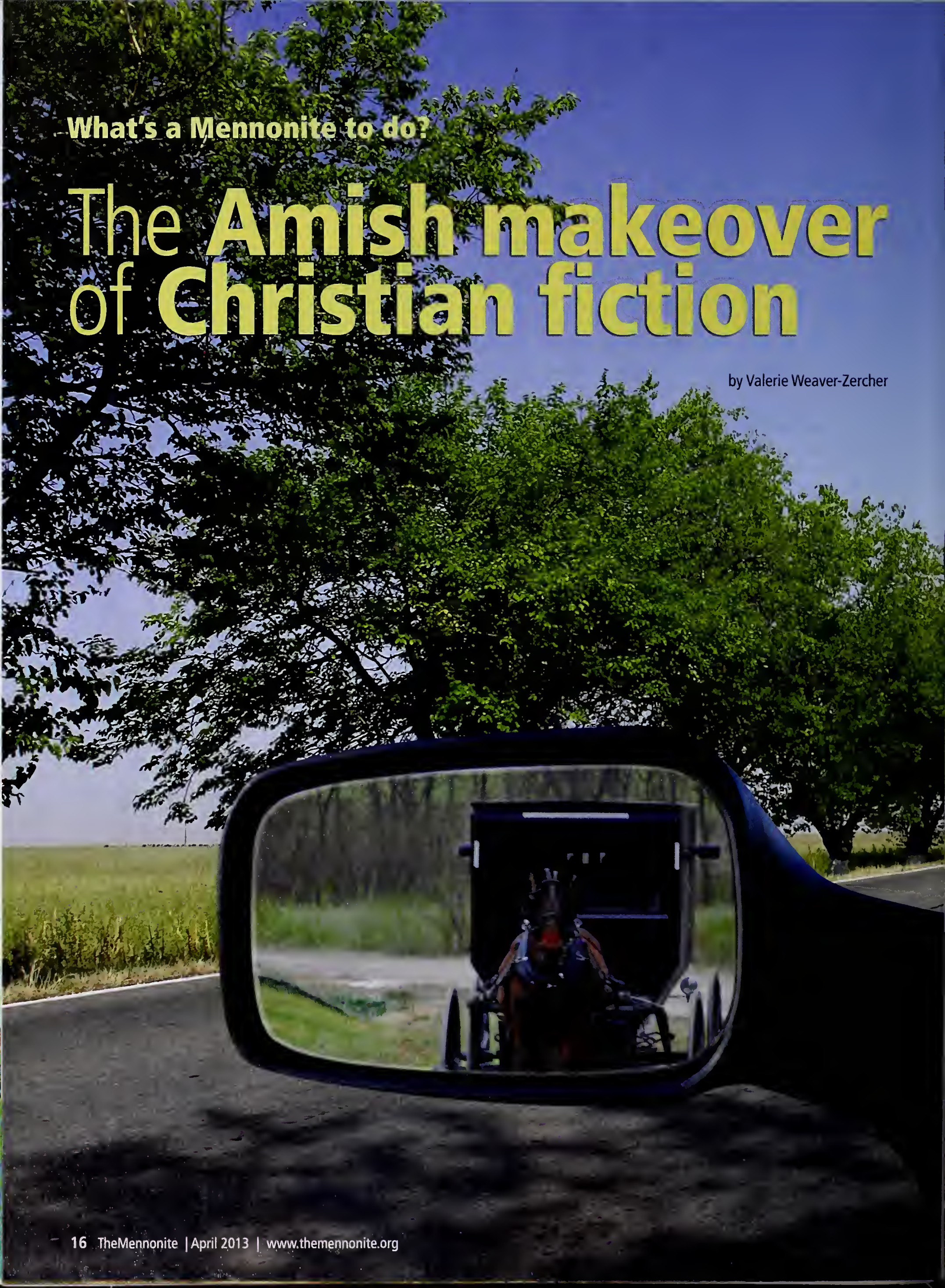
**When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?**

I'm encouraged by other women leaders who openly acknowledge the difficulties they sometimes face. By virtue of the fact that they are actively serving as mentors and teachers, they become powerful symbols of what can be achieved even in the midst of doubt or uncertainty.

What's a Mennonite to do?

# The Amish makeover of Christian fiction

by Valerie Weaver-Zercher



My grandfather left his Amish home in Holmes County, Ohio, to follow the wheat harvest and never went back. His was a typical journey up what has been called the "Anabaptist escalator": from the lower floors of the Old Order Amish to the more acculturated and more evangelical Mennonites. In his day and among many of his peers, the personal conversion stories and Bible studies of conservative Protestantism held a great deal more appeal than the buggies, broadfall pants and other world-rejecting gestures of conservative Anabaptism. While he died a Mennonite, John Slabaugh, my mother's father, spent many years worshipping with the Plymouth Brethren and appreciating the Baptists, and he was a dedicated fan of Billy Graham and premillennial theology.

Now, some 100 years after he left the church of his birth, characters dressed like my grandpa's mother are flooding the inspirational fiction market. Eighty-five new Amish romance novels were published in 2012; that's one new Amish-themed novel about every four days. It's also 83 more than were published a decade earlier, in 2002. With few exceptions, the novels are written by evangelical Christian authors and published by evangelical publishing houses. The top three authors of Amish fiction have sold more than 24 million books, and Amish romance novels regularly appear on the *New York Times* bestseller lists. The Amish-fiction phenomenon has been covered by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, among other venues, and full-page ads for Amish-themed novels regularly appear in the pages of this magazine.

That the Amish, whom he left, would become so popular among the evangelicals, to whom he fled, might have appeared to my grandfather the ultimate irony. From his early and mid-20th-century vantage point, the Amish likely appeared in the rearview mirror of history, and the engines of industrialization, urbanization and evangelicalism would have confirmed for him their marginal place in both his story and the larger American one. That fictional Amish women would someday dominate the bookshelves of the Christian bookstores he frequented and that articles about the so-called "bonnet-rippers" would appear in newspapers and magazines around the country—and that Amish-themed reality TV would introduce millions of viewers to Katie Stoltzfus and Lebanon Levi—well, it's safe to say that my grandfather couldn't have seen any of it coming.

Eighty-five new Amish romance novels were published in 2012; that's one new Amish-themed novel about every four days.

**As I researched the blockbuster popularity** of Amish fiction for my book *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels*, I thought a lot about my grandfather and about how my connection to him might flavor my consideration of the genre. I knew I couldn't offer an objective analysis about this Amish-fiction phenomenon, to which I felt some intimate if mostly historical connection, and that it would be disingenuous to pretend I was an aloof observer. So I wrote myself and my Mennonite identity into the book. I needed readers to know that I had some skin in the game, so to speak, and that I felt a strange blend of flattery and revulsion as I watched the burgeoning size and commercial strength of the genre.

I'd wager that many North American Mennonites feel a flicker of pride in our theological and ▶

historical connection to the group that has become the buggy-driving superstars of popular culture. This is likely truer of Swiss-German Mennonites who share ethnic bonds with the Amish than of Mennonites of other ethnic backgrounds; still, a shared Anabaptist genotype with the Amish makes all Mennonites, regardless of ethnicity, ecclesial cousins if not actual ones. Maybe all the Amish hoopla in popular Christian and secular cultures signals that there really is something excellent about this faith to which we belong. Indeed, telling Amish-fiction readers I interviewed that my grandpa grew up Amish, or that I had visited with Amish people in their homes, never failed to impress them.

What aspects of Amish or Anabaptist life are filed down to pleasing size in Amish novels, or perhaps even erased?

Yet as I read Amish novel after Amish novel, I felt a niggling sense of annoyance, too. It had something to do with the borrowing and benefiting at work in the fact that 60 non-Anabaptist novelists are advancing careers by locating their stories in Amish country. I felt uneasy that a culture and faith that I felt close to was being sliced and diced into loving glances over chicken pot pie and conversions in the cornfield, and I wondered whether readers were learning anything about Anabaptism's communitarian ethics, nonresistant commitments and history of persecution. The near absence of references to nonresistance in the books made me suspicious. Although I hesitated to blame romance novels for offering a partial view of a complicated and centuries-old religious tradition, I also wondered whether these gentle narratives of marriage and family and neighbor and land did more to illuminate or obscure the identity of a complex culture.

**Romance novels are not theology** or history texts, and they shouldn't be read as such. It's a novelist's prerogative to create a cast of characters, choose a setting and build a plotline from the stuff of imagination; if a writer were only allowed to write about her or his own ethnic or religious groups, literature would be much impoverished. And while I didn't do a factual inventory of the novels—despite the fact that the first question I got from many readers was, "How accurate are the books?"—as far as I can tell, some of the novels do an admirable job of getting both the details and essence of Amish life right.

But as I read Amish novels, and as I interviewed readers and writers and publishers of the books, I couldn't help but wonder about what is drained from a religious faith when it becomes the epicenter of a commercially successful literature. What aspects of Amish or Anabaptist life are filed down to pleasing size in Amish novels, or perhaps even erased? When one novelist of Amish-themed romances, in describing her workshop "Amish Fiction 101" at the American Christian Fiction Writers' Conference, wrote that the Amish world "is such a perfect fit for Christian fiction," I wondered what part of the Anabaptist story she might be missing.

Let's be clear: Mennonites both consume and produce Amish romance novels. One marketing manager told me that the books produced by his publishing company, which publishes some of the leading Amish-fiction writers' work, sell best near Amish communities. "That's not because we're selling to the Amish," he clarified; "that's because we're selling to the Mennonites who live near them." I spoke with many appreciative Mennonite readers of the novels, and heard about many more, including one 92-year-old retired Mennonite farmer who read almost 90 Amish novels before he died.

**Mennonites are creators of Amish novels**, too. Good Books, a Mennonite-owned publisher, is publishing the novels of Linda Byler, the only currently Amish novelist writing Amish-themed novels available to a general readership. And Herald Press was one of the first entrants to the Amish fiction field, having published Clara Bernice Miller's Amish-themed novels in the 1960s and 1970s and then Mary Christner Borntrager's and Carrie Bender's novels in the 1980s and 1990s, long before Beverly Lewis landed the lucrative Amish-fiction account.

It makes sense, on one hand. Many Mennonite readers of fiction are looking for the same things other Christian readers of fiction want: novels that won't offend their religious and sexual ethic and that will spur them on to greater Christian devotion. Amish romance novels are chaste texts about chaste protagonists living within what is perceived to be a chaste subculture: one that has remained set apart from many of the seductions of technology and modernization. Historian Eric Miller, writing in *Christianity Today*, suggests a key appeal of the genre to evangelical readers—

and, I would add, to many Mennonite readers—is that the Amish are "an adequately alien, adequately familiar community to imaginatively work out persisting cultural and theological questions." Questions of how much freedom is too much, of how a church community should shape the lives of its members, of how Christians should respond to modernization and consumption and changing social mores: these and other questions preoccupy many people of faith, and Amish fiction becomes a stage on which one answer is played out.

For some Mennonite readers of Amish fiction, of course, the Amish are more than "adequately familiar"; they're downright familial. Still, many Mennonite readers experience the stressors and pace and anomie of modern life in the same way non-Mennonite readers do, and while they may feel psychically closer to the Amish taproot of the novels, they share the concerns of their non-Mennonite evangelical sisters and brothers about the directions and distractions of modern life.

**Mennonites are also** some of Amish romance novels' most disgruntled critics. One Mennonite professor suggested in an academic paper that the genre is as damaging to female readers as TV shows like *The Bachelor*, since both contain the underlying message, "Sit back, relax and enjoy the ride—in a limo or a buggy—because a man's agency is all that matters, not your own." And a Mennonite blogger could not disguise her disgust. "Without going into the literary quality (or lack of) of any of these books, the #1 thing that makes me cringe when I read them is the authenticity factor. … It's typically cavalier American to think you can do some reading and visit a few Amish families and write an authentic novel. An Amishman would never be that audacious about a different culture, assuming that you could read about the Masai, for example, and visit for a week and then write a story about them."

It might be a misplaced sense of custodianship that has these writers and me feeling anxious about non-Anabaptist novelists representing "our" people—who aren't, of course, "ours" at all. The Amish don't need us as Mennonites to look after them. In fact, many Amish people would likely feel more kinship with fundamentalist-evangelical readers of the novels than they do with some of us Mennonites who share their churchly DNA. Still, it's hard to ignore the sense that people are paraphrasing a religious tradition not far from our own and to wonder whether something is being lost in the translation.

**As I talked with Mennonites**, both loyal readers of the novels and vehement critics of them, the breadth of Mennonite opinion that exists about the genre became clear. Mennonites belong to different "taste publics," as theorist Herbert Gans calls groupings of people who share aesthetic sensibilities and ways of evaluating art and literature. What one taste public values—such as uncomplicated prose, piety-driven narratives and happy endings, in the case of Amish fiction—another dislikes. Since Mennonites are a diverse lot in that regard—which is a good thing—I don't presume to propose some sweeping Mennonite reaction to Amish fiction. And because the genre is nearly as diverse as the people whose lives it fictionalizes, making grandiose claims either about its merits or its dangers is unhelpful.

Because the genre is nearly as diverse as the people whose lives it fictionalizes, making grandiose claims either about its merits or its dangers is unhelpful.

But here's one more fact that likely would have made my grandfather, who ended up a member of Hartville (Ohio) Mennonite Church, raise his eyebrows. While Amish fiction remains an alpha dog in the world of Christian romance literature, evidence is gathering that a related subgenre is nipping at its heels: Mennonite fiction.

*Valerie Weaver-Zercher is author of* Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels *(Johns Hopkins University Press, March 2013). She is a writer and editor in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and a member of Slate Hill Mennonite Church.*

NEXT
18
MILES

# Fire from heaven

## Musings on peace from an armed pickup truck

by Titus Peachey

Dec. 4, 2012: It was just after breakfast when the pickup truck arrived that would take me, a Mennonite Central Committee worker in Laos, on a trip into the countryside to visit a health clinic. To my surprise, on the back of the truck stood four Lao soldiers, armed with AK-47 submachine guns and grenade launchers. My travels that day with a doctor from the Ministry of Health would take us through… ▶

… "insecure territory," and the ministry had arranged for soldiers to travel with us for our protection. Today, nearly three decades later, I still struggle with the implications of what happened that day in 1984.

**The logic of taking four soldiers** for protection is as common and everyday as the air we breathe. This logic permeates the evening news, our entertainment industry, our national security policy, our school playgrounds and even our homes. If someone threatens you, be prepared to threaten them back. If someone attempts to harm you, harm them first. Intimidate, frighten or beat anyone who might plot ill against you. And in a fascinating sequence in Luke's Gospel (9:51-56), we find this same logic also active in the minds of Jesus' disciples.

On their way to Jerusalem from Galilee, Jesus and his disciples walked through Samaria, widely known as hostile territory due to the long-standing enmity between Samaritans and Jews. When they were refused hospitality at a Samaritan village, James and John seethed with anger. "Shall we call down fire from heaven to destroy them?" they asked Jesus. Having just argued about who was the greatest, they were eager to use their power to set up the kingdom in Jerusalem. Peeved by the nettlesome Samaritans in their path, their response was as old as Cain and Abel and as new as drone strikes in Afghanistan: a holy and revenge-filled fire from heaven.

Jesus rebuked his disciples, and they went on to another village.

To my regret, I must acknowledge that I did not challenge the pre-emptive fire from heaven assembled on the pickup truck that day in Laos. I sat in my front seat and tried not to think about the soldiers in the back. By taking my seat that day, I violated my most deeply held beliefs about the nature of God, the way of Christ and my commitment to peace. Had any of the four Lao soldiers been harmed or had they harmed or killed someone else, I would have been devastated.

My reflections on this troubling experience surfaced with greater intensity in an MCC project visit to Iraq in 2004, just about a year after the U.S. invasion. Knowing we would be spending time with a landmine clearance agency that regularly used armed guards and not wanting to repeat the experience in Laos, I arranged in advance not to travel in one of their vehicles. Yet everywhere we went there were U.S. military Humvees and trucks, all with many M-16s sticking out the side with trigger fingers at the ready. There were huge military bases, military convoys, guard posts and checkpoints. We were still surrounded by lethal firepower, even though our vehicle was unarmed.

So I have come to realize that for all intents and purposes, I am still in an armed pickup truck.

As U.S. citizens and members of a community of faith who follow the way of Jesus, we struggle with a mighty contradiction. For as we pledge our allegiance, not to nations but to a God who calls us to love even our enemies, we travel the world in a metaphorical U.S. pickup truck bristling with real weapons. "Fire from heaven" streaks from the truck with regularity, creating the smoldering ruins of villages such as the disciples of old had envisioned. With high-tech weaponry available in abundance, there is no need for government to implore God to send down fire from heaven. Yet God's blessing is regularly invoked by political and religious leaders alike.

In the context of a military that outspends the next 15 countries combined, our malls, sports industry and Hollywood are like a narcotic, dulling us to the pain we visit on God's children here and abroad.

**Held in the truck by thousands** of economic tethers sewn by our own hands, we are bound to the interests of corporations in the global market that bring many of us the good life. We purchase relatively cheap food, fuel, clothing, electronics and entertainment brought to us through trade policies that are often unjust. In the context of a military that outspends the next 15 countries combined, our malls, sports industry and Hollywood are like a narcotic, dulling us to the pain we visit on God's children here and abroad.

Yet many in our communities are realizing the truth of the prophet Samuel, who warned the people of Israel about the inevitable oppression of a king with a standing army (1 Samuel 8). A highly militarized power structure will take resources from the people, sucking up the very air the common good needs to breathe. While the king will have his chariots and horses, his drones and smart bombs, the people on the margins and the agencies that serve their needs will struggle to survive. Indeed not everyone on our U.S. pickup truck is enjoying the ride. While high-cost weaponry glistens on the exterior, poverty and hunger stalk the interior of the truck.

What would happen if training in nonviolence became a part of preparation for baptism?

Several days after James and John had nearly fire-bombed a Samaritan village, Jesus told a story about a man who was robbed while walking on the rocky road from Jerusalem to Jericho and left beside the road for dead. Holy people—a priest and a Levite—came along and passed by on the other side of the road. Jesus' disciples leaned in to listen, knowing the next person would be the hero. Likely expecting it to be someone like themselves, they are astounded to hear Jesus declare that a Samaritan was the one who offered grace and healing to the wounded traveler. It is almost as if Jesus deliberately reached back several days' journey to the village the disciples wanted to reduce to a pile of ashes and picked up a Samaritan to place into the story.

**In so doing, Jesus challenged** the disciples even as he challenges us to reject the popular narrative of enemy stereotyping and violent revenge that so characterize our national life. Yet Jesus goes way beyond inviting us to be civil or tolerant toward our enemies. In the form of a story, he reminds us that people we may want to destroy may in fact be capable of offering grace and healing from God. He reminds us that it is we who carry self-images of cultural and national superiority, who may in fact be the wounded ones in need of healing.

And so, I wonder, What would happen if we were bold enough to humanize our enemies as Jesus did? What would happen if we routinely remembered the victims of U.S. drone strikes in our Sunday morning prayers and regularly drew attention to them in letters to our local newspapers?

What would happen if our churches became a place where nonviolent peacemakers of all nations and religions were so celebrated that their names rolled off the tongues of our youth as easily as the names of sports stars, movie actors/actresses and pop singers?

Where might God's Spirit lead us collectively if we who benefit from the protection of the guards on the pickup truck withheld our war taxes? What if our tax dollars went instead toward local and international acts of justice, mercy and peacemaking? Might we find blessing in such a corporate act of restoration and healing?

What would happen if we loved the soldiers on our pickup truck, especially those wounded in soul and spirit from the brutality of war? What if we recognized that their wounds symbolize our collective failure to learn and practice the ways of peace?

What would happen if we invested the same energy to prevent our nation's bombs from falling on others, as we have invested in seeking our own exemption from military service?

What would happen if training in nonviolence became a part of preparation for baptism?

In all likelihood, I will travel the world on this metaphorical U.S. pickup truck the rest of my life. I will be blessed by the many good things on the pickup truck, but I hope I will never stop struggling with the contradictions between the faith I live by and the logic of empire that permeates many of the realities in my life. For this struggle, surely we all need another visitation of fire from heaven, like the fire of the Holy Spirit that descended on fearful believers at Pentecost. This was not a fire that destroyed. Rather, it brought together the entire known world, breaking down the barriers of language, culture, race and nation, inspiring a season of sharing and unity. Would that such a fire would burn within our community of faith on the pickup truck, inspiring courage and creativity in our commitment to living Christ's way of peace.

*Titus Peachey is Mennonite Central Committee's peace education coordinator.*

This is the second of a Bible study series by different authors on the key Scripture texts for Mennonite Church USA's next biennial convention, to be held July 1-6 in Phoenix. The convention's Scripture texts are Psalm 24:1, Philippians 3:20-21, Romans 5:1-5 and Ephesians 2:14-22. See www.mennoniteusa.org/convention.

**PHOENIX 2013**

**CITIZENS**
of God's Kingdom
HEALED IN HOPE

### Living with Jesus' story (Philippians 3:20-21)

# Heavenly citizenship

by Hyun Hur

## Why do we live here?

It was only when I was in my late 20s—and encountering undocumented immigrants coming to work in South Korea—that I began to ponder the significance of citizenship. Korea was becoming one of the most economically developed countries in Asia, and people began pouring into Korea from all over Asia, Africa and South America, looking for work opportunities from manual labor to high-tech expertise. Many came with work visas, but many also entered on tourist visas, then settled in the country with documents that had expired. Many of these undocumented workers often faced abuse while enduring unspeakable working conditions without any guarantee that they would even be paid for their work. ▶

As I worked with my church to find ways to serve the people, I wrestled with the questions, Why do these people come to Korea? Why do they put up with such abuse and suffering? Is there any divine purpose other than the economic opportunities in Korea that brought them so far from their homes?

Now living in Los Angeles and having worked with immigrant churches, I have known undocumented Korean immigrants in congregations who live with the anxiety of someday being arrested and deported. Many of these friends feel as though a path to citizenship in America would be the answer to all of their day-to-day struggles.

I also know many successful first-generation immigrants who have a green card or U.S. citizenship but have not assimilated to the dominant culture. Most of the time, their focus is on how to survive in America and how to secure the well-being of their immediate family.

Is there a divine purpose for us to be in America other than the economic and social opportunities?

And I know U.S.-born children of immigrants who have had access to educational and financial resources but feel disconnected from the history and tradition of their immigrant parents as well as the larger American history and tradition taught in the classroom.

The impact of citizenship is indeed complex, but I still have the same questions. Why are we here? Is there a divine purpose for us to be in America other than the economic and social opportunities?

Working with immigrants across the spectrum has taught me about the dynamic interrelationship among history, identity and mission. A community shares the stories of its history, and these stories shape its identity and mission. In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul writes to a church in the city of Philippi—a unique city with a distinctive history, identity and mission. Like people today, the Philippians knew the value of citizenship, and it is to these people Paul addresses his words about the core identity Christians share and how to truly live as citizens of heaven.

### Background

Philippi was located in Macedonia, a northern part of the Greek peninsula. It was built in 358–357 B.C. and named after Philip, king of Macedonia and father of Alexander the Great, after he conquered and occupied the land. Later, this city was destroyed and rebuilt by Emperor Octavian and became a colony of the Roman Empire. Octavian strategically set Philippi up as a military outpost, with the mission of bringing Roman culture and rule to northern Greece and expanding Roman influence on neighboring areas.

Philippi was populated with war veterans, and since it was a Roman colony, those who lived there were granted Roman citizenship with its many privileges, including property ownership, tax exemptions and legal protection. These privileges also were extended to Macedonian Greeks and Jews in Philippi, and they too valued and felt proud of their identification with Rome.

I wonder what common stories the Philippians knew by heart and retold to the next generation. How did these stories shape their identity as Philippians and unite them?

We can imagine that many living in Philippi knew the shared story of the Battle of Philippi, in which Octavian became the victor for Rome to prevail. Perhaps Philippians frequently expressed how lucky they were to be living in the reign of Pax Romana and acknowledged Philippi's significant role in the Roman Empire. Because they were granted citizenship in a colony located outside Rome, they probably did not take the privileges of their citizenship for granted. The prestigious prize of Roman citizenship conferred the ultimate power of Rome.

### The text

Paul, who knew the power and privilege of being a Roman citizen, strategically planted a church in Philippi instead of in the small port of Neapolis (Acts 16). He knew the context of the Philippian church well, and challenged the Philippians not only to live in the history, identity and mission created by the Roman Empire for the citizens of Philippi, but also to embrace the deeper story rooted in the life and power of Jesus—to live as citizens of heaven here and now, and to wait with hope.

Verse 20 begins with "but," so we must examine verses 18 and 19 to see the contrast Paul makes between those who are and are not citizens of heaven. Paul identifies those who do not follow Christ as "enemies of the cross" (v. 18). Their primary focus is on "earthly things," and they fulfill their selfish desires and ambitions any way they please. The distinctions can be seen in the following comparison:

| vv. 18–19 | vv. 20–21 |
|---|---|
| enemies of the cross | citizens of heaven |
| end is destruction | end is new order under Jesus |
| mind on earthly things | mind on things of heaven |
| glory in their shame | look to the transformation of the glorious body |

Paul boldly declares, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 20). Paul exhorts the church members to remember that their identity is found in Jesus, from whom they have citizenship in heaven. Their new identity is founded solely on Jesus. Paul also purposely uses the word "soter" ("savior") in this verse. "Savior" was usually used to refer to Caesar, but Paul subversively uses it to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, contrasting Jesus with Caesar.

| | |
|---|---|
| citizenship of Rome | citizenship in Heaven |
| Philippi | heaven |
| Pax Romana | Pax Christus |
| victory through war | victory through the cross |
| Caesar | Jesus |

This verse also challenges the Philippians to conduct themselves as citizens of heaven in the present, not somewhere in the distant future after their death. Church members are to bring the reign and rule of heaven to earth here and now with the hope of their Lord by the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus' power is strong enough to bring all powers under him and to transform his followers to be able to finish their mission from heaven.

Thus, Paul reminds the Philippian church of an alternative narrative they are to cling to—the central story of Jesus, who became victorious not through war and violence but through his self-emptying at the cross (2:6-11). Jesus ushered in Pax Christus and the reign of heaven, in which his followers have citizenship under his glory and power. This is the story citizens of heaven must remember, retell and pass down to generations that follow to shape their identity and mission.

**Reflections**

1. What kinds of stories shape our identity as followers of Jesus Christ today?

2. What kinds of powers should be under the reign of Jesus Christ in our lives?

3. How have stories of power, privilege and wealth shaped and influenced the stories and identities of Mennonites as followers of Jesus?

4. What kinds of mission are we engaging that stem from our identity as citizens of heaven?

5. How are we influencing the world around us as citizens of heaven?

**Then why do we live here together?**

It is only when we seriously identify ourselves as heavenly citizens that we can truly unite as a body of Christ. No earthly categories and documents will have the power to divide the citizens of the kingdom. As a community of heavenly citizens, we can share the mission given us and work together to proclaim the reign of God.

We can focus so much on sending that we fail to welcome those who are before our eyes.

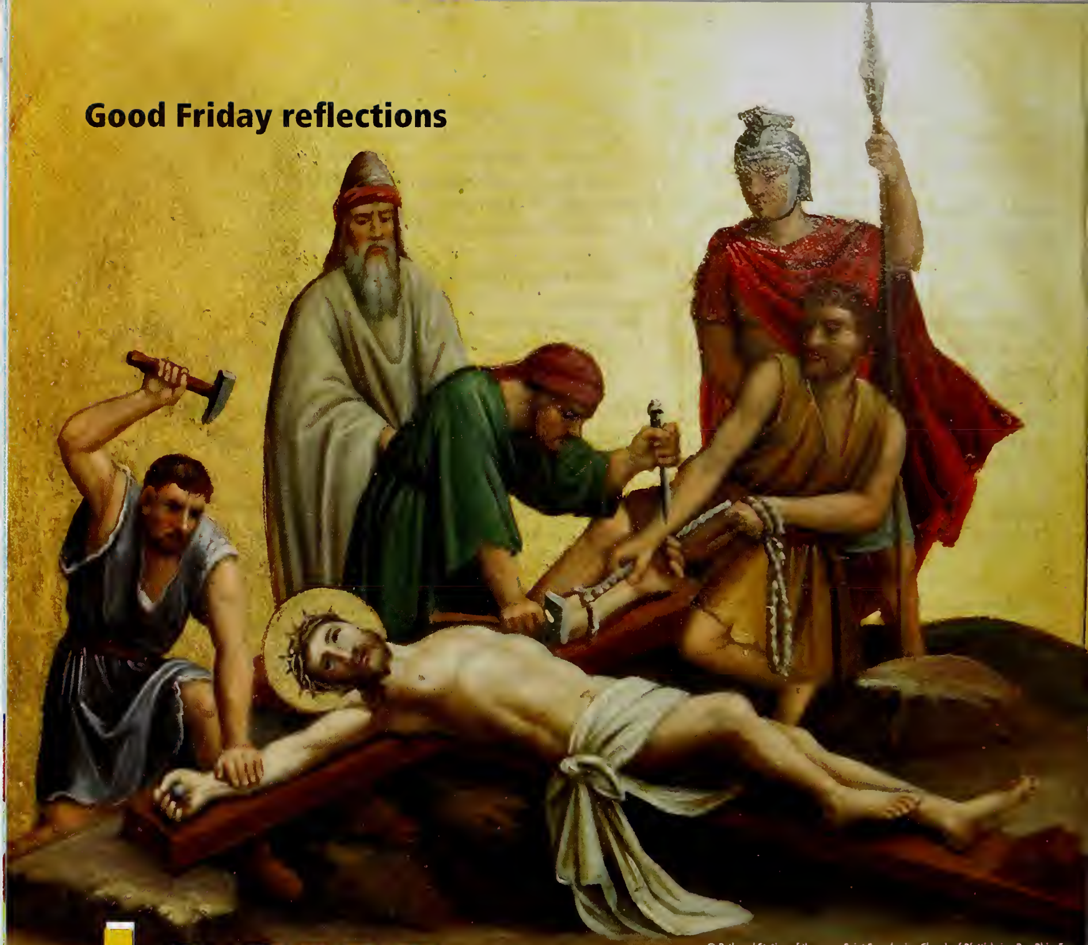
Thinking back to my ministry years in Korea, the irony was that while foreign laborers were flooding into Korea, Korean Christians were focusing on sending missionaries to the "10/40 windows" (parts of the world located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the Equator, including Saharan and northern Africa and almost all of Asia)—almost the same places the laborers were coming from. Korean Christians were blind to the strangers in their midst and to the abuse and the injustice the foreign workers faced. We can focus so much on sending that we fail to welcome those who are before our eyes.

We need to see the significance of the strangers and newcomers around us, for they play a big role in the body of Christ with their views and needs. In our global context, everyone is—in a way—a stranger and a welcomer. We are to identify ourselves as strangers in this world and to be broken in our identities as strangers. We are also to identify ourselves as heavenly citizens and welcome the strangers around us. This is the mission God has called us to be part of.

Mission is happening all around us, in our workplaces, schools and homes. May it bear fruit so that the world may see Jesus' invitation to become citizens of heaven.

*Hyun Hur lives with his wife, Sue, who contributed her insights and editing to this piece, and three children in Temple City, Calif. Five years after planting and pastoring a Korean Mennonite church in Southern California, they recently launched ReconciliAsian (ReconciliAsian.com), a peace center for Korean immigrants and beyond. Born in Suwon, South Korea, Hur believes Mennonites could offer an alternative and refreshing perspective to Korean Christianity.*

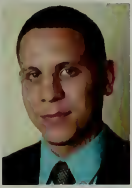
Good Friday reflections



© Pethrus | Station of the cross, Saint Symphorian Church of Pfettisheim, Bas-Rhin, France

# Jesus and gun violence

Each year hundreds of people carry the message of peace and justice across the heart of New York on Good Friday. For many years Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship has sponsored one of the Stations of the Cross, this year #11, which shows Jesus being nailed to the cross. ▶



The ambulance arrived, and we all stepped back. His mother's wails made my spine crawl.—Jesus Gonzalez

**2013 Good Friday Station 11: Mark 15:22-24**

"One scene is engraved in my memory. Witnesses' tears reflected the police lights as the young man [lay] on the ground. His eyes grew big; he had a piercing stare; it was like he could see into my soul. I placed my hand on his chest, and it felt as if I could grab his heart. His heart was pounding. I told him everything would be all right. The ambulance arrived, and we all stepped back. His mother's wails made my spine crawl. Later, young people gathered to place flowers and candles where their friend had been killed … in the past 13 years. I've witnessed five incidents of gun violence and been to many more funerals."—Jesus Gonzalez (Jan. 30), retrieved from www.wnyc.org/shows/rookies/blogs/rookies-blog/2013/jan/30/op-ed-gun-city/

Gun violence is an intense reality not only in Newtown, Conn., but here in New York City as well. This story belongs to Jesus Gonzalez, an activist and community organizer living in Bushwick (Brooklyn, N.Y., neighborhood). His is just one story of many victims of gun violence in this city.

Jesus our Lord was nailed to the cross. Imagine the trauma and pain Mary went through watching her son nailed to the cross. Imagine that same trauma and pain etched in a mother's face as she watches her child fall victim to gun violence. Imagine the community's response: a mix of grief and acceptance. This is just another day in the neighborhood.—*Katie Penner and Allison Schrag*

*Writers of the reflection and prayer are participants in the New York City unit of Mennonite Voluntary Service, Katie Penner from Vineland, Ontario, and Allison Schrag from Newton, Kan. On Good Friday, March 29, they planned to read this reflection and lead the prayers at Station 11 in Times Square, around 11 a.m.*

## Prayers of the faithful

Today, we pray for the victims of gun violence in our city and that their suffering can bring about change. Together we pray,

God, grant us peace. Heal our broken hearts with your love.

Today, we pray for comfort and healing for the communities torn apart by violence. Together we pray,

God, grant us peace. Heal our broken hearts with your love.

Today, we pray for wisdom for the politicians and activists advocating for stricter gun regulations. Together we pray,

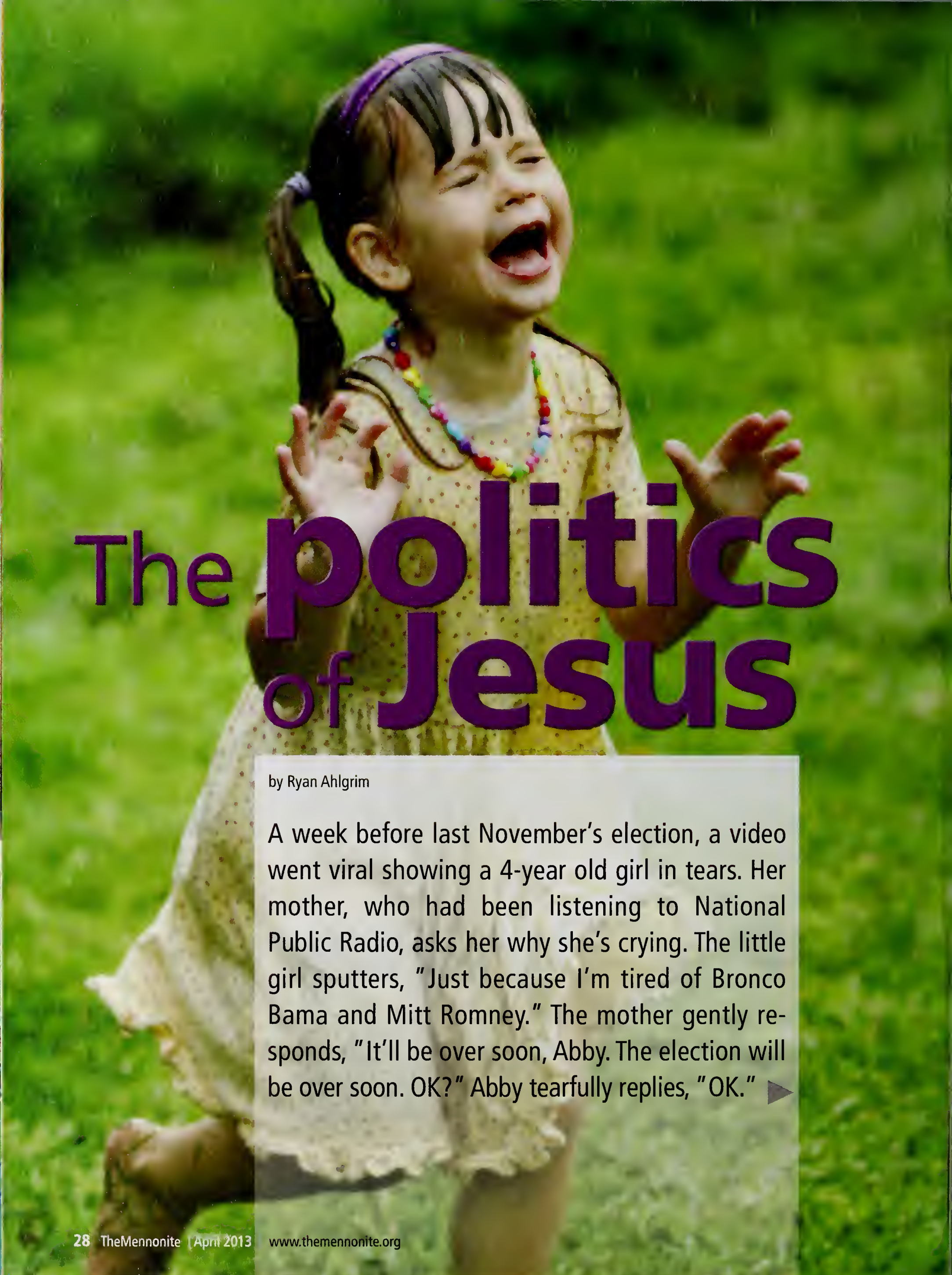
God, grant us peace. Heal our broken hearts with your love.

Today, we pray for change to come to this place. Together we pray,

God, grant us peace. Heal our broken hearts with your love.

Katie Penner and Allison Schrag in Times Square in New York City.

Photo provided



# The politics of Jesus

by Ryan Ahlgrim

A week before last November's election, a video went viral showing a 4-year old girl in tears. Her mother, who had been listening to National Public Radio, asks her why she's crying. The little girl sputters, "Just because I'm tired of Bronco Bama and Mitt Romney." The mother gently responds, "It'll be over soon, Abby. The election will be over soon. OK?" Abby tearfully replies, "OK." ▶

AMBS

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# AMBS window

## IS THE COST OF SEMINARY WORTH IT?

**AMBS students answer this question in this issue. We also invite readers to reflect on this question with their pastors and with people who have gifts for ministry. Then use the contact information on page 3 to join us in making seminary education affordable for students who are preparing for ministry.**

### Jacob Hess

Truth #1: Seminary is expensive. Truth #2: Seminary is also incredibly transformative. Most of us students live in the strained tension between these truths. Thankfully, AMBS works diligently to chip away at the veracity of the first truth while bolstering the precious potential of the second. How many other educational institutions, after all, have lowered rent by 15% recently?!

More personally, AMBS's need-based support and matching grants have helped my family make it through seminary without diving into debt. For this, and so much more, I am thankful. Though I may not be leaving seminary with a bulging wallet or an enviable savings account, I will be leaving as one transformed and better equipped to serve Christ's church and our broken world.

*Jacob Hess is a student in the Master of Arts: Peace Studies program. Jacob is doing an internship this year with the Center for Community Justice in Elkhart, Ind.*

### Deborah-Ruth Ferber

The first semester of being a member of the AMBS community has been a good investment. AMBS was a more expensive option for furthering my studies, but the quality of the school outweighs the cost. Seminary education is worth it for me not just because of the degree, but because of the classes and community which have fostered my stay here.

I am willing to make this investment because of the maturing that takes place from being a part of AMBS. I am not the same person I was six months ago as a result of being shaped by this community in incredible ways. The low-key atmosphere, classes which stretch my critical thinking, the connection between faculty and students, and extracurricular involvement have all cultivated a new identity for me.

I was blessed by the support of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Mennonite Church Canada, and AMBS, because I could not have considered seminary without them. I want to take it a step further, though: it is not just the funds, but the confidence, support and encouragement receiving those funds gave to me that inspired me.

*Deborah-Ruth Ferber is a student from Leamington, Ont. Previously, she participated in !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth. This summer she anticipates joining L'Arche Daybreak, Richmond Hill, Ont.*

(Continued on page 2)

# IS THE COST OF SEMINARY WORTH IT?

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Caitlin Michelle Desjardins**

My time at AMBS has been the most formative and crucial educational experience of my life thus far. When I was a recent college graduate who hoped to study full-time, receiving a merit scholarship that covered my tuition was an incomparable gift. I knew even before I was offered a scholarship that God was calling me to AMBS and there I would thrive. The ability to attend and focus on my studies and investing in the community that is such a distinctive blessing of AMBS without loans and financial worries has deeply enriched my time here. AMBS, beyond anything, has been a place where I have discovered a deep love for Christ's church and all of God's people. I can confidently say I am leaving AMBS both ready and enthusiastic to dedicate my life to building Christ's church and serving with all that I am. I am so grateful to everyone who has made that possible. An education at AMBS is truly priceless, building God's kingdom in remarkable ways.

*Caitlin Desjardins anticipates graduating in May with a Master of Divinity degree and a focus on theological studies.*

**Jocelyn Graber**

I am now faced with the repayment of student loans for my seminary education. Was it worth it? Yes, a resounding yes!

The cost of a seminary education is the cost of answering God's call; it is the cost of discipleship. I am reminded of the financial assistance from my congregation and from our conference. I am humbled by the many donors who unknowingly contributed to my education, and that of many others, because they believe that an Anabaptist education for our denominational leaders and pastors will strengthen the churches to serve as God's witness to the world. I am touched by the many prayers that are behind those donated dollars and from those who are unable to give as generously as they would like.

AMBS is not a tuition-driven institution. The financial cost is shared by the community of believers who support the vision of the seminary and the Anabaptist faith. I still have loans because I chose not to work while being a full-time student, but thanks be to God, AMBS helped to transform my life, and that is priceless.

*Jocelyn Graber earned the Master of Divinity in spring 2012. She studied at AMBS–Great Plains in addition to taking classes on the Elkhart campus. She now is a development officer for AMBS, serving in the Great Plains region.*

**Theo Odhiambo**

At AMBS I find the community in which a leader can be safely wrong and the space to learn from the mistakes. The experienced mentorship of a professor gives the future leader much-needed skills that simply cannot be learned or honored by reading a book or attending a weekend conference. Being told you are wrong by the right person can be the best thing to ever happen to a leader.

Seminary is a sacrifice. Plans are delayed, resources are expended, and criticism can be abundant, but all of this contributes to the development and growth that is vital to thriving in ministry.

*Theo Odhiambo is a Master of Divinity student, after earlier earning a Master of Arts: Theological Studies. He and his family returned to Elkhart from Tanzania where he had served as a school administrator.* ●

**Page 1 photo: AMBS students Tobias Magatti and Sara Erb and visiting scholar Dr. Won-Bum Chung listen intently to in a fall class on economic justice.**

**AMBS Window**
**SPRING 2013**
**Volume 23 Issue 2**

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

# ALUMNI NEWS

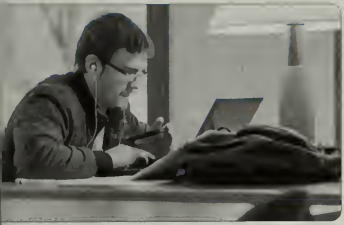
The Institute of Mennonite Studies has released a book telling the story of **Emma Richards (Bachelor of Theology 1950)** and her ordination, the first ordination of a woman for congregational ministry in the Mennonite Church. *According to the grace given to her: The ministry of Emma Sommers* traces the roots of Emma's call and the encounters that shaped her legacy as model and mentor. See **www.ambs.edu/publishing/New-publications.cfm.**

**Franklin Breckenridge (Master of Divinity 1999)** and Cora, his wife, were recognized in October for their leadership and service to the Indiana NAACP.

**Lauren Friesen (Master of Divinity 1970)** has been granted the Outstanding Alumni Award by Pacific School of Religion (where he earned an MA and PhD). Lauren is the chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Michigan-Flint.

**Andy Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2007)** is coeditor of *A faith embracing all creatures: Addressing commonly asked questions about Christian care for animals*, published by Cascade Books. **Malinda Berry (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2000), Nekeisha Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2008)** and Andy wrote chapters. ●

# HELP STUDENTS PAY THE COST



### Snapshot of student aid and scholarships

**Percentage of students who receive aid:**

- Full-time students: 80%
- Part-time students: 60%

**Percent of tuition that full-time students receive in aid (average):** 38.5% *(excludes full-tuition scholarships)*

**Percent of students whose aid includes gifts from conferences and congregations:** 38%

**Number of students currently receiving full-tuition scholarships:** 6

**Number of full-tuition scholarships available this fall:** 2

Long-standing full-tuition scholarships for students demonstrating gifts for ministry are the Church Leadership Award and Next Generation Scholarships.

A new Anabaptist Scholarship will begin this fall. This will cover half of tuition for students who identify with the Anabaptist faith but are not members of Mennonite congregations. Applications for fall 2013 were due in February. For more details, visit **www.ambs.edu/admissions/Anabaptist-Scholarship.cfm**

### Assist students in paying for seminary study

**Church Partnership:** AMBS matches aid that students receive from congregations and conferences. Details of this match will change in fall; visit **www.ambs.edu/admissions/documents/Church-Partnership.pdf** for information. Forms for this aid for 2013–14 are due by May 1.

**Scholarships:** You can establish a scholarship with a minimum gift of $25,000 or contribute to an existing scholarship. AMBS development officers can assist donors in doing this.

**President's Circle:** Make a commitment to a level of giving to AMBS each year. This helps AMBS anticipate how much aid can be given to students as well as how to fund the day-to-day work of the seminary. A new President's Circle is the **Fidelity Circle,** in which donors set up a recurring electronic gift, usually by credit card.

**Designate a gift for student aid:** Friends of AMBS, when they send contributions, can designate all or part of the gift to go to student aid. (This aid will go to the general student aid fund, not to the account of a specific student.)

### Contact us

AMBS development office
development@ambs.edu

AMBS financial aid office
jwalker@ambs.edu
Or call 800.964.2627 ●

# NEW MASTER OF DIVINITY WAITING TO LAUNCH

AMBS anticipates offering a new plan of study for the Master of Divinity degree, available in two different modes of study:

**Master of Divinity Connect** will allow students to earn a Master of Divinity degree even if they cannot move to campus. By taking most courses online and visiting campus occasionally for intensive learning and formation, students can apply what they are learning to their current context of ministry or work.

The **Master of Divinity Campus** will build on the long-standing strengths of AMBS. Students will benefit from the mentoring, formation and fellowship that are provided in daily intentional community life.

AMBS awaits approval from accrediting agencies with the anticipation of offering these two options for the Master of Divinity this fall. To sign up to receive more information as it is available, visit **www.ambs.edu/academics/Master-of-Divinity-Connect.cfm**

**Photo: Joel Ickes from Etna Green, Ind., is a first-year student in the Master of Divinity program.**

# YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Volunteers are essential to much that happens at AMBS, especially to hosting events such as the annual Pastors Week. Several volunteers returned in January to assist with preparations as well as with special maintenance projects, including Helen and Wilbur Yoder from Wellman, Iowa; Hedy (pictured) and Ed Rempel from Chatham, Ont.; and Cathie and Wes Braun from Keewatin, Ont. Local volunteers also are valuable, contributing to the beauty of the campus, serving in the library and assisting with office tasks. All volunteers have opportunities to join in chapel services, eat meals with the seminary community and use resources in the library. Learning to know students and faculty is often a highlight of the volunteer experience.

Volunteers' time, energy, expertise and hospitality are gifts to AMBS. Tasks are varied, so if you are interested in contributing your time and skills, AMBS has opportunities for you. Please contact Viridiana Navarro: **volunteercoordinator@ambs.edu** ●

# PANORAMA

**The Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore at AMBS serves all who are interested in books about Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and ministry. Seminary student Martin Navarro (right) is bookstore manager and students, such as Charles Bontrager (left), serve the customers—who are not limited to students and faculty. See www.ambs.edu/bookstore.**

## Commencement: May 25

Celebrate with 2013 graduates on Saturday, May 25. The commencement service, at 2:30 p.m. at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., will feature speaker Lydia Harder, former director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

## New books

- *John* in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series, by Willard Swartley, Ph.D., professor emeritus
- *Living Gift: John's Jesus in Meditation and Poetry, Art and Song*, compiled by Willard Swartley

## Webinar

**Discerning the Powers: Moral Discernment, Theology and Mission**, May 1, 2:00–3:30 p.m. Eastern, with Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist Studies.

## Summer courses

See details: **www.ambs.edu/academics/summer-courses.cfm**

May 28–June 14
- **Greek Readings: Synoptic Gospels**
- **Seminar in Theology: Baptism**

June 17–28
- **The Five Scrolls**
- **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations**
- **Celebrating the Christian Year**

June 28–29 (hybrid)
- **Pastoral Counseling and Theology**

July 8–19
- **Faith Formation and Spirituality: Adults and Seniors**

## AMBS–Great Plains summer course

- **Family Systems and Pastoral Care**, May 28–June 15 ●

# PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

### SARA WENGER SHENK

It's impossible to put a money value on effective and visionary leadership for the church. No price tag comes close to marking the worth of a wise biblical interpreter who knows what makes for peace in the midst of a church conflict. There's no way to calculate what adequate payment would be for a pastor who tenderly shepherds your family after searing tragedy strikes.

Is Mennonite seminary education worth its cost? The answer is straightforward and unequivocal. Absolutely. Frankly, the privilege it is to join a community devoted over decades to dwelling in the Scriptures and to best pastoral practices is priceless. Compassionate, competent and confident leaders play an immensely critical role in the flourishing of healthy communities everywhere.

Not all seminary graduates become good leaders, but a whole lot of them do. Remarkably high percentages of teachers in our Mennonite colleges, staff members of mission boards and service agencies, and pastors learned Anabaptist best practices of Bible reading, caring for the poor, restoring right relationships, and communicating the transformative story of Jesus from a Mennonite seminary.

The price of an education is daunting if we expect the courageous persons who say, "Here am I" to pay it all themselves. Even though tuition covers only a portion of the actual costs of a quality education, too many of today's graduates are carrying unacceptably high debts, and too many gifted young people can't afford to come in the first place.

Do I, along with our board and seminary leadership, worry about that? All the time. Not because the education they receive isn't worth every penny. But because too many of us have lost the vision for investing in persons who will lead the church into a revitalized future.

Thank God for those who remember that the cost of ignorance and immaturity given full sway in local congregations is far greater than an investment in those who are ready to become masters of the craft. Thank God for those who know that investing in Christ-centered leadership formation will bear fruit long into the future. ●

## Ask questions with Sara

Join Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, in asking questions and engaging issues in the church. Her blog, Practicing Reconciliation, will "pose questions, test assumptions, resist labels, play with possibilities, experiment with integration, practice wholeness": **www.ambs.edu/practicingreconciliation/**

# An Election Day sermon

In response to that video's popularity, NPR issued a formal apology to Abby and "all the many others who feel just like her. We must confess, the campaign's gone on long enough for us, too. Let's just keep telling ourselves, Only a few more days, only a few more days, only a few more days."

**The prophet Isaiah envisions** an entirely different political campaign. This is how God would run it: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street" (Isaiah 42:1-2).

Contrast that with the barrage of attack ads that pummeled us for the weeks and months before the election. Contrast that with all the defaming and distortions and fear-mongering to which we were subjected in the presidential campaign. The tactics made me embarrassed to be a member of either political party.

But God's candidate is gentle and nonviolent in his approach: "a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench" (42:3a).

Our political system would say that's ineffective. God's candidate will never get elected that way. And even if he or she does get elected, such a candidate will never be able to get anything done.

But that's not what Isaiah says: "He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching" (42:3b-4). Isaiah is telling us that God's way of bringing justice is very different from our usual arm twisting.

Jesus makes a similar point in the Gospel of Mark. His disciples, James and John, want powerful positions in Jesus' new government. They take him aside and ask if they can have the top cabinet posts: "Let us be the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense." When the other disciples hear about it, they're outraged, because they wanted those cabinet posts.

Jesus has to calm them all down: "You know that among the Gentiles—those pagans who don't know the true God—that their rulers lord it over them, and their officials act like dictators, pushing for their own political interests. But that's not how it's going to be among you. Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first must be a slave to all. For the Son of Humanity came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life to rescue all" (Mark 10:41-45 paraphrased).

God's government conquers not through force or filibusters, not through bullying or badgering, not through threats or war but through persistent self-giving love.

**This is the politics of Jesus.** This is not the politics of the Republicans or the Democrats or the Libertarians. This is a politics of overcoming evil with good. This is a politics of overcoming resentment with reconciliation. This is a politics of overcoming pride with service. God's government conquers not through force or filibusters, not through bullying or badgering, not through threats or war but through persistent self-giving love.

Today, some of us voted for one set of candidates, some for another set of candidates, and some did not vote at all. As Christians we must recognize that when we vote—if we vote—neither major political party represents Jesus' way. We must recognize that when we vote—if we vote—we are supporting a system that is only the vaguest suggestion of the justice and peace God's kingdom is bringing. We must recognize that when we vote—if we vote—there is only one Christian nation, and it is not the United States. It is the church—a nation without borders or immigration restrictions, a nation without an army, police force or weapons. This is the nation we believe in; this is the nation we hope God uses to help bring healing to humanity.

Today, let us remember our allegiance is to Jesus and to Jesus' way. Yes, let us witness to the government. Yes, let us try to influence the government for good. But let us do it the way Christ would do it.

*Ryan Ahlgrim is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.*

### Our work can be our mission.

# Vocation as missional engagement

StockFreeImages.com

by Marty Troyer

For hundreds of years, the way we think about the work of Christ and the church has gone something like this: Special people do special things for God, and everybody else supports it financially.

Twila gave herself completely to her vocation as a teacher. She loved her work, her students and the deep-rooted feeling that teaching in a public school was exactly what God had called her to do. Well before she'd ever heard the word "missional" uttered on the lips of a preacher, she had joined God in mission at Valley Oaks Elementary in Houston. This was her expression of faith and creative way of seeking the peace of our city. And she was good at it, too, for decades. She not only taught with excellence but cared for co-workers, was known for her nonanxious presence and prayed daily for her students.

But her efforts didn't fit the mental model for being a "good Christian," which meant serving in church or being on mission through volunteerism above and beyond time spent at work. "It was always as if what I did didn't matter to the church," she says. "Unless I volunteered or joined a committee, I always felt the church didn't count what I did. The pressure was always to do more."

This story helps us think about the way we think. For most of us, the teacher in this story has us pegged for what we are: compartmentalized thinkers.

For hundreds of years, the way we think about the work of Christ and the church has gone something like this: Special people do special things for God, and everybody else supports it financially. We call and ordain pastors to be these special people who do special things when they live at home, and we send and commission missionaries for the same work that happens to be "over there." For the rest of us, "being Christian" and connecting to God's story happens primarily through tithing and volunteerism.

Kristi was one of the many "special ones" in our congregation who had said yes to overseas missions. From early in college she was passionate about missions, and after several doors closed for her in other countries she embraced mission work in China. Her time in China was formative for her faith and worldview, changing her forever. But a curious thing happened while there: She realized she was called to a different mission field.

**Her true mission field** was the corporate world, in particular to live as a missionary at Exxon Mobile in Houston. She is now a missionary at Shell, giving the best of her life and energies where she works rather than by volunteering. She is one of our core leaders at Houston Mennonite, and we're aware that in previous generations her new mission field, like Twila's, would not have "counted." We think that needs to change.

In his book *Public Jesus*, Tim Suttle says that we may spend up to 65 percent of our time at work. Yet, as the story illustrates, in the old model of being a Christian, this doesn't count. The worth of "normal Christians" comes in their capacity to support financially the "special Christian" and in the amount and quality of time they can shave off their busy schedules to volunteer.

Work is something I do over there to allow me to participate with God over here. The "ethical version" of such a mental model is an invitation to do your job purely (after all, work is a necessary evil, isn't it?): not gossip, keep your books right, not cheat, maybe start a Bible study.

**Compartmentalized thinking** assumes there is a place that God acts and a place God seemingly doesn't. But how can we faithfully follow Christ in all of life if our mental model suggests that what matters happens only in my limited "Christian" time, such as going to church and volunteering? Such compartmentalizing of our lives is incompatible with Anabaptism, which insists we are to follow Jesus in all areas of life. Daily discipleship to Jesus is a call for all Christians in all areas of life, not just an elite few who perform special tasks.

Let's look closer at the 65 percent of our time we spend at work. Work is not a necessary evil, drain on your time or boost to your bottom line. It connects you intimately with God's work and mission in our world. It's an invitation for you to catalyze your best energies of heart, mind and strength to seek shalom in our cities and the common good of neighbor and enemy alike.

In describing Mennonite faith and practice in his book *Beliefs*, John D. Roth says: "Mennonites believe that hard work—the disciplined skill of the artisan and professional, the creative expressions of poets and musicians and artists, the routine tasks of parent and farmer—is a reflection of God's original act of creation. Work that is honest and constructive, that heals and reconciles, that makes the world more beautiful—all such work celebrates the goodness of God."

Through both the form and the function of our jobs, we can glorify God. Formally, we can be Christian in our workplace by insistence on paying a living wage, practicing caregiving to co-workers, exercising concern for the environment or allowing our word to stand for itself.

Functionally, we can connect faith and work through the specific type of work we choose to do. We as a congregation build, engineer, teach, heal, nurture, organize and engage in work that genuinely furthers the common good. This work in and of itself should be brought under the lordship of Christ and given the appreciation it deserves. And when people like Twila and Kristi are doing just that, it should be the church that supports them in their mission, more than demanding them to support the church's through volunteerism.

**Your work matters.** It doesn't matter because it allows you to tithe or is flexible enough to permit you to volunteer. No, it matters, business matters, production matters, employment matters. It matters because it is part of God's healing plan for our world. It's a powerful way to participate in the reign of God with the 65 percent of your time too often ignored when we compartmentalize.

Do you see how big the gospel is? It completely obliterates the notion of "secular" and integrates work into our faith. As Paul says, "Whatever you do, in word and work, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." God is creating a beautiful new world right in our midst and invites us to join in through the work that we choose to perform. Thus Suttle says, "Our jobs, our work will have meaning for us only when it finds its proper place in God's good creation." Is your work part of the reign of Christ? Or is it dedicated to something other than Jesus?

Work connects you intimately with God's work and mission in our world.

Psalm 139 helps us answer those questions by moving us past the demand to incorporate God into all areas of life and into the promise of God's presence in every area of our lives. A missional retelling might go something like this for my congregation:

*Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to NASA, you are there. If I spend all day engineering ditches, you are there. If I make my income in business or the corporate world, you are there. If I spend all day with patients, energetic students, clients or family, you are there. In all our workplaces your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast in pursuit of the common good.*

Most Christian business people today have heard few sermons in their lives directed at their work. Sermon applications that target family, marriage, church or spiritual life are prevalent. But few have heard that Christianity calls us to move beyond volunteerism to vocation. If as a church we continue to embrace a missional identity, that must unequivocally change. I pray you have or find that meaning in your work. And I pray for wisdom in empowering you for your ministry there.

*Marty Troyer is pastor of Houston Mennonite Church.*

# Why we gather

**Dick Thomas** is moderator of Mennonite Church USA and superintendent of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School.

In a few months we will gather in Phoenix for the biennial convention and delegate assembly of Mennonite Church USA. Since the local congregation is the locus of our church, why and how do we gather as a national conference?

We will come together for worship, celebration, business, monitoring the progress of our Purposeful Plan, fun and service. We will affirm our core values and be involved in networking, learning, biblical/communal discernment and a prayer walk. By gathering, we will strengthen our identity and discern next steps in our journey.

We desire that our convention be a signpost pointing toward the kingdom of God, which the Bible defines as justice, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. We want to make Spirit-led decisions of faithfulness that help all of us in the diversity of our geographical settings, experiences and theological understandings to be united around our core values, which include confessing Jesus as Lord, seeing the Bible as authoritative, owning the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and seeking the Spirit's leading.

**We will gather in polarizing times** in our culture, and these polarizations impact us as a church. Sometimes we talk about conflict management and difficult discussions as if they were unique to our times, not always recalling that all generations have needed to struggle to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I am challenged by the story of the special session of the Mennonite General Conference in 1944 in Goshen, Ind. The conference was called because of a conflict threatening the (Old Mennonite) church around differing definitions of nonconformity and disagreement on whether the national conference should have the authority to discipline area conferences that were noncompliant with national conference understandings.

Mary E. Bender wrote about this tension-filled gathering that had reached an impasse: "Sanford Yoder, for 16 years president of Goshen [Ind.] College until his retirement in 1940, quietly rose, … and Guy Hershberger, a delegate, described him this way, 'In his gracious, irenic spirit, expressed through his gentle but deeply resonant voice, he pointed to the real reason for the impasse. The reason lay deeper than the rightness or wrongness of any given point of view. It lay in the disintegration of fellowship into mutual distrust, as each side ostracized the other.'

"'When Yoder sat down,' continued Hershberger, 'there was deathly silence. Had a pin dropped, you could have heard it—until a brother suggested a time of prayer.' The delegates knelt for an hour and a half in that sultry August night. When the prayer was over, the discussion resumed, but this time it was confession more than discussion.

"The next morning when the delegates met again, a softened resolution from each side passed easily. The church was free to carry out the work to which the postwar years called it."

Will we gather believing the best about each other?

This 1944 conference was a watershed moment in our history, and from my perspective it speaks to our questions of trust and our willingness to listen to each other and the Spirit in these times. So how will we gather in our national delegate assembly in Phoenix?

**Will we gather in humility** to listen to the other and to study the Scriptures together? Will we do communal/biblical discernment? Will we gather to confess, bless each other, pray and seek the Spirit's direction? Will we gather believing the best about each other? Will we gather around our core values? Will we gather realizing that unity is from God and that we are called to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

Mary Bender wrote that delegates "willing to loosen the grip of ego investments in their attitudes and move toward the other side in response to the love and grace of God can usher in a new day." May that new day continue to dawn among us in Phoenix and beyond so that we can be God's people of healing and hope.

May it be observed as we gather, "See how they love each other," and may that love and unity flow through us to the world as a witness to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. TM

# Celebrate God's creation

Christians have marched, cleaned up roadsides and planted trees for Earth Day because of their love of the natural world and its creator. Others have been offended by the varied political stances of Earth Day promoters and have refused to support Earth Day. Some Christians contend that God will destroy the earth (Isaiah 24:1, 2 Peter 3:7), so living sustainably should not concern us.

**Creation Day:** Occasionally Earth Day celebrants have promoted pantheism (seeing God and nature/creation as one). Jewish and Christian environmentalists are usually careful to affirm that God is above creation, even if they believe God is seen in the created world. What we call "nature" or "earth" God created, as he created humans. So we should praise God for the goodness of his creation and celebrate all of God's creation. Could we call the Sunday before April 22 (traditional Earth Day) Creation Day? The focus of this day would be finding ways to praise God by thoughts, words and deeds for the greatness of creation, including animal, vegetable, human and all parts of the created earth. Maybe we should include in Creation Day praise for sun, moon and planets, too.

**Biblical basis:** When we look at creation passages in the Bible, we begin to understand that all of creation, including humans, is intended to honor God. All creation, even sea monsters can praise God. See Psalm 148:7-14.

Humans as well as sky, water, animals and soil all contribute praise and glory to God. When we pollute these parts of creation, we lessen the praise they can bring to God. Destroying the habitat of the snail darter or the spotted owl (leading to their extinction) hinders God's plan for creation: to bring God glory. We humans bring glory to God by being at our best, mentally, spiritually and physically. Eating good food, learning about God and the created world, telling others about God's goodness in creation and redemption, and staying in top physical condition bring praise to God, just like participating in a Sunday morning worship service.

**Creation Day and the poor:** Being at our best mentally, spiritually and physically requires a certain level of resources. Many people today do not have the food, health care and education that would put them at their best due to the current distribution of resources. With the spread of areas of drought, those financially better off move to areas with better resources. The poor cannot afford to and must live on polluted or dry land. Jesus gave a lot of attention to the poor. Perhaps the most important reason to focus on creation care is to give the same urgency to care for the poor that the Bible does.

Christians have cited Romans 8:22 ("creation groans") and Revelation 11:18 ("destroy those who destroy the earth") as indication of biblical support for creation care. But is it clear that these passages go beyond the Hebrew concept that moral corruption directly corrupts the soil? What is clear is Jesus' concern for the poor. In our day it is clear that environmental degradation affects the poor first. Celebrating creation means enabling the poor to celebrate creation by stopping the pollution of their space, cleaning up of areas where poorer people live.

**Creation and redemption:** Easter, which often comes just before the proposed Creation Day, reminds us of the goodness of God's creation and the promise that the consequences of sin to all of creation have or will end. In Christ, humans are brought back into a right relationship with God. God promises the same for the rest of creation. The future of God's work is to bring about the restoration of the original goodness of creation (Romans 8, Revelation 20). Restoration includes stopping and repairing human misuse of creation. We participate in the process of redemption by cleaning up polluted streams, restoring damaged habitats and learning to make sustainability our focus (not using up natural resources). Rededication to our part in the redemption of creation should be part of our Easter celebration.

So let's celebrate creation. Let's celebrate God's goodness to us through experiencing flowers, trees, mountains, rivers, birds, babies, athletes and our lovers. We can add to God's praise by cleaning up Black's Run, removing trash from Rawley Pike or starting a compost pile. Perhaps we should have our Creation Day Sunday service outdoors (weather permitting or not—love that spring rain) to enhance our appreciation of the created world. Later, a walk in the mountains, along the seashore or to the garden can enhance our appreciation of God's creation.

Celebrate Creation Day: Praise God and do his work. TM

**David Alleman** is a member of Weavers Mennonite Church and is composting coordinator and occasional gardener at Our Community Place in Harrisonburg, Va.

Rededication to our part in the redemption of creation should be part of our Easter celebration.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Phoenix delegates to decide about new agency

## MHS Alliance and Mennonite Church USA want to strengthen relationship.

Mennonite Health Services Alliance and its direct forbearers have been a part of the Mennonite family for a long time. During the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix, Ariz., July 1-6, delegates will be asked to strengthen this connection by endorsing MHS Alliance as a full agency of the church.

With delegate approval, MHS Alliance would become the church's fifth program agency, joining Mennonite Mission Network, MennoMedia (formerly Mennonite Mission Network and Thirdway Media), Mennonite Education Agency and Everence (formerly Mennonite Mutual Aid).

MHS Alliance member organizations, during their annual meeting Feb. 14, prior to Mennonite Health Assembly in Orlando, Fla., voted unanimously—41 to 0—to approve two proposals recommended by the MHS Alliance board of directors:

- that MHS Alliance accept the invitation to become an agency of Mennonite Church USA and
- that MHS Alliance bylaws be amended as recommended (to facilitate the change).

Marty Lehman, associate executive director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA, says, "MHS Alliance's becoming an agency of Mennonite Church USA is like a homecoming. Many of the member organizations, which were started as ministries of our mission organizations, have literally taken care of the orphans and widows. Thus, they have been denominational ministries all along. It is nice to welcome MHS Alliance to Mennonite Church USA as an agency focused on health and human service ministries."

Rick Stiffney

Lee Snyder

**MHS Alliance has deep roots** in the former Mennonite Church in the United States. As early as the late 1800s, Anabaptists in the United States began developing health and human service organizations such as nursing homes, mental health centers, hospitals, senior housing, underserved communities and agencies serving youth and those with developmental disabilities. In some cases, these ministries were initiated locally by individuals, congregations and other groups. Conferences and mission and service agencies at the regional or national level began other organizations.

A church-related network of health and human services organizations can be traced to the 1940s. Following World War II, when many Mennonite young people served in mental hospitals as conscientious objectors, Mennonite Central Committee began addressing mental health. Eventually, MCC established five mental health organizations under the umbrella of Mennonite Mental Health Services.

**Paralleling these developments** and spanning a longer period of time was the work of the Mennonite Board of Missions through its health and welfare division.

In 1988, Mennonite Mental Health Services was separated from MCC. At the same time, Mennonite Board of Missions spun off its health and welfare institutions to a reconstituted Mennonite Health Services. Then MHS began relating to other health and human service ministries supported by conferences and congregations from across the entire Anabaptist family.

Later, MHS refocused its mission and adopted a new name, MHS Alliance. Today, MHS Alliance has 74 member organizations in 17 states; 62 of these are affiliated with Mennonite Church USA. The organizations include acute-care hospitals, developmental disability services and mental health programs. Forty-eight member organizations provide health care and housing for seniors.

MHS Alliance has maintained strong church connections through covenant relationships with three different denominations: Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Brethren and the Brethren in Christ. These relationships have fostered exchanges of mutual accountability and benefits flowing between MHS Alliance and its member organizations and the sponsoring denominations.

The church-agency connection has also been reinforced by a board that takes seriously the church's sponsorship of health and human services organizations. The three denominations appoint six members of MHS Alliance's board, and the member organizations elect six additional members. Lee Snyder, former president of Bluffton (Ohio) University, has chaired the board since 2008.

**Rick Stiffney of Goshen, Ind.,** has served as president and CEO of Mennonite Health Services since 1999. He advocates a close connection with the church, which he describes as shifting the trajectory or "bending the curve." He says that many pressures can contribute to disaffiliation between institutions and the broader church.

"A strong and mutually beneficial relationship between church and institution is vitally important to the mission of MHS Alliance and our members—being part of God's work of healing and hope in Christ Jesus," Stiffney says. "If we are to have ministries that have Anabaptist character, we need strong relationships between the Anabaptist community of faith and the ministries. Through these relationships we seek to collaborate in ministry and witness, practice common core values and support one another."

A few years ago, the MHS Alliance board revised the organization's statements of vision, mission and values to guide it at the beginning of the 21st century:

- Vision: to be a community of vibrant Anabaptist health and human service ministries committed to God's work of healing and hope in Jesus Christ.
- Mission: MHS Alliance strengthens and extends Anabaptist health and human service ministries in faithfully and effectively fulfilling their missions.
- Values: spirituality and prayer; community, mutuality and service; human dignity and compassion for all people; stewardship of God's gifts; advocacy for justice, peace and reconciliation; ethical commitment; and grace and hospitality.

This constellation of vision, mission and values has an impact on the day-to-day operations of member organizations.

MHS Alliance's becoming an agency of Mennonite Church USA is like a homecoming.—Marty Lehman

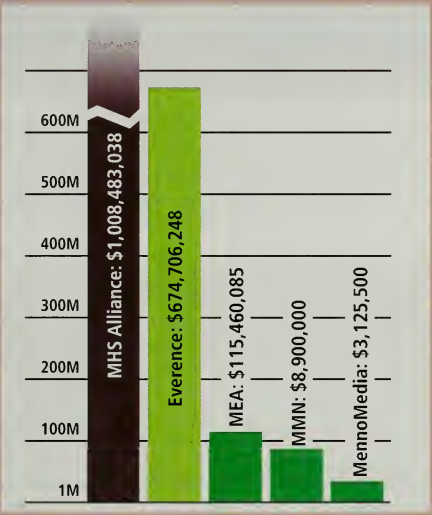
"We believe that a vital relationship between organizations and their community of faith strengthens both the organization and the church," Stiffney says, "providing a clear sense of faith-centered mission and identity."

MHS Alliance provides a variety of faith-grounded services for its members. These include leadership development through the Values-based Leadership Program, executive support via Executive Circle and affinity group networks and expert consultations. Consultations focus on governance and compliance issues, leadership transitions and executive searches, and best-practices related to day-to-day operations.

In January, seven new consultants joined MHS Alliance, bringing a cumulative total of approximately 120 years of experience to MHS Consulting Services. They bring expertise especially in the areas of operations, finance, strategic planning and market research. These consultants serve clients and members nationally from offices located in Goshen, Ind., Camp Hill, Pa., Newberg, Ore., and Wichita, Kan.

As health and human services practices in the United States continue to evolve, MHS Alliance is poised to help its member organizations and the many other nonprofit organizations it serves adapt to ongoing change even as they maintain core commitments to the Anabaptist churches that gave them birth.—*MHS Alliance staff*

**Finances for Mennonite Church USA agencies**



Each agency provided the information in this graph:

- MHS Alliance total represents the expenses for the organization and its members in 2012.
- Everence total is the 2012 revenue amount and includes new member deposits and return on investments in 2012.
- Mennonite Education Agency amount includes operating expenses for MEA and the higher education schools for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012.
- Mennonite Mission Network's amount is the operating budget for the current fiscal year and includes Mennonite Voluntary Service unit activities.
- MennoMedia is a binational agency of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

# Elkhart building brings diverse staff together

## LEED Certification pending; about $2.3 million still owed

Everett Thomas

Jim Bixler, 76, has been volunteering at the three different Mennonite office locations in Elkhart, Ind., since January 1995. He worked full-time until a year ago, when he reduced his volunteering to half-time. Here he places envelopes through a postage machine in the mail room in the new Mennonite Church USA office building.

On April 14, 2012, Mennonite Church USA leaders gathered in Elkhart, Ind., for the dedication of a new office building. One year later, nearly 70 employees from five different denominational agencies or entities are using the facility, an environmentally up-to-date building that is still being paid for.

In February 2010, the Executive Board (EB) agreed to proceed with construction of the building and authorized a loan of up to $1.5 million. The goal was to have a more efficient, functional and flexible facility that would serve multiple organizations working together.

In June 2010, David Weaver, chief financial officer of Mennonite Mission Network, reported on progress of a Joining Together, Investing in Hope campaign. EB then gave approval to a $2.1 million loan and agreed to develop a plan for a debt-free building. It also authorized that 10 percent of the new money raised after June 15, 2010, in the capital campaign be used for racial/ethnic concerns.

By November 2011, $3.2 million was still needed (including $300,000 for racial/ethnic concerns), and the EB committed itself to helping raise funds for the campaign.

To date, the costs of the building, including construction, architect and professional fees, plus furnishing and equipment, are around $6.8 million. There is a mortgage loan balance of $1,995,000, with a current interest rate, which adjusts monthly, of 2.7 percent. An estimated balloon payment of $1,489,000 is due March 10, 2017, and there is a loan from Mission Network of $340,000.

Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman says that the fund-raising for the building has taken a back seat to other matters. "We have a manageable mortgage, so we are not pushing to get the building paid for," he says. "However, we occasionally approach donors who have interest in the building."

**LEED Certification:** Mennonite Church USA staff submitted documentation late last year for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification, says Weaver, then resubmitted with clarifications in January. Their goal is to be gold certified. To date, they have not received word about their certification.

The building of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, next door to the Mennonite Church USA building, is gold certified.

One goal of the new facility was to bring together a greater variety of Mennonite Church USA staff. The previous facility, which was rented, included primarily staff from EB and Mission Network.

As of December 2012, the building included 65 staff members from EB, Mission Network, Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), MennoMedia and *The Mennonite*. And Marty Lehman, director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA, says that staff from other groups will be added soon. According to Weaver, "The current capacity is 90 [workers], with potential for 110, if the lower south wing [is] finished out."

**Collaboration:** An outgrowth of bringing people from different agencies together in one building has been greater collaboration, says Lisa Heinz, senior director for operations and chief financial officer for MEA.

Carlos Romero, MEA executive director, says it has been "a positive experience," although "it took some time to adapt." MEA had its offices in rural Goshen, Ind., before the new building was completed, and EB expressed the hope that MEA staff would move into the new building.

Romero says that MEA discussed the move and hoped for the best. His staff has less space now than they had in their previous facility, but they've not been disappointed, he says. "There is a synergy and conversations taking place that would not have taken place otherwise."

Lehman adds that the new arrangement has led to "more efficient work and more cooperation." She says two staff members of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet) will move into offices on April 1, and one MennoMedia staff member plans to move into the building this spring and another one in the fall.—*Gordon Houser*

# When loving neighbors conflicts with the law

## Congregations wrestle with conscience in response to immigration issues.

As congregations across Mennonite Church USA engage immigration issues and relate to people who are undocumented, some are confronting the question of whether God is calling them to break the law or to follow the law of the land.

"We all want to love our neighbors, and we all want to be law-abiding citizens," says Anne Mitchell, pastor of a Mennonite congregation. "When a decision needs to be made between showing love to a person who is undocumented and upholding the law, some aren't sure what do to."

Some Mennonites believe that breaking the law is contrary to faithful living, adds Nelson Kraybill, who pastors the same congregation.

Mitchell says that one of the congregation's members who was previously undocumented was arrested and jailed last year.

"It was devastating for her family and for the rest of us," she says. "She was taken out of town right away, and the church scrambled to support her. Thankfully, she was released from the state detention facility, which happened following a prayer vigil held by the congregation."

"Her being arrested galvanized my convictions and the convictions of others," says Kraybill. "When the laws demand that we act in ways that harm the vulnerable and the needy, then our first recourse is to seek change of law. We don't just immediately go break the law."

In the case of immigration, however, Kraybill believes laws may become more punitive. "At some point," he says, "our resisting that law becomes a prophetic witness on the order of Acts 5:28-32, in which the apostles say, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority.' In unusual circumstances, we, too, need to do that."

**John D. Roth, professor of history** at Goshen (Ind.) College and director of the Mennonite Historical Library, shares perspectives on the issue of breaking the law from Mennonite history.

"At the beginning of the movement in the 1500s, Anabaptists were accused of being terrorists whose refusal to follow the law [by not swearing oaths or baptizing infants] undermined all social order," he says. From then on, Roth explains, Anabaptists have felt a strong need to convince society that they do, in fact, have respect for the law.

"At the same time, Anabaptists have maintained a strong tradition of continuing to be willing to break the law of the land in order to uphold principles of faith," he says. "The fundamental principal that Christians—in discernment with each other and the church—may at times violate or publicly disobey a law as a matter of Christian conscience is a well-established pattern in the Anabaptist tradition."

"It would be nice if [people who are undocumented] could have come here by legal means," Kraybill says. "That is the preferred way. But the waiting list is too long for following the legal process to be of any benefit. Their children would grow up hungry. And, however they got here, they're here. They're in our neighborhoods and churches, and they need work and food."

**Shalom Mennonite Fellowship** in Tucson, Ariz., wrestled with these questions in the 1980s as undocumented people fled to the area during the wars in Central America and were denied refugee status by the U.S. government.

Bryce Miller, Shalom's pastor, explains that Shalom was one of a number of churches offering sanctuary.

"There was a considerable disagreement over this in the church, and a fair number of people left," he says. "The Shalom congregation that remained adopted a position of welcoming and shielding Latin American refugees."

He notes that Shalom amended its bylaws to reflect this position and adds that the issue still is "very much present for us today as a church and as individuals."—*Hilary J. Scarsella for Mennonite Church USA*

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# Videos explore legacy of war in Serbia

## Refugees thought they reached safety, immediately forced into army.

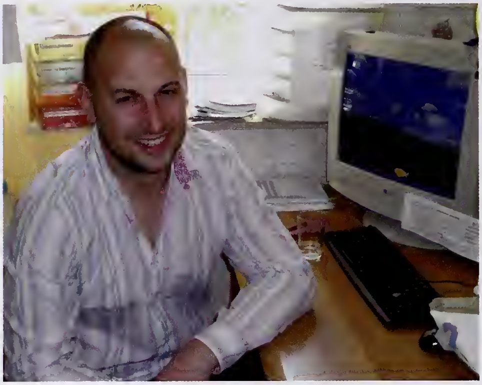

Photo provided

Lane Stopher at War Trauma Center in Serbia

For Serbian young adults, the conflict of the 1990s is a vague memory, but the effects of that war still linger all around them.

Lane Stopher and his co-workers at the War Trauma Center in Serbia wanted to explore the aftermath of war on society. They enlisted the help of young adults by creating a video contest around the subject of "psychological effects of violence" and asked the youth to submit videos for a chance to both educate the public and win prize money.

The grand-prize-winning film, *Stolen Freedom*, featured the story of Serbian refugees who were fleeing the conflict that was encroaching on their homes in parts of Bosnia and Croatia. The refugees thought they reached safety, but they were immediately turned around and forced into the army.

That story, along with the other videos, helped illustrate some of the trauma that war causes to individuals and culture.

"Most people don't really know much about the larger effects of war—the causes, the symptoms and what they do to the larger society," Stopher says. "We wanted to do something educational but also creative."

**The conflict in the former Yugoslavia** started at the end of the 1980s, when the once-prosperous country was facing growing economic challenges and rising turmoil in its diverse population. This combustible setting was ignited in 1991 by growing nationalism and internal and external political pressure, which catapulted the entire region into a dramatic and bloody conflict, resulting in the formation of six official countries and one disputed country. An estimated 140,000 people were killed and more than 4 million displaced during the 10-year conflict.

Stopher, from Central Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio, works at the War Trauma Center through a partnership facilitated by Mennonite Mission Network. He writes grants to help fund the Center's counseling and psychological support for those traumatized by violence and ongoing conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The film project was part of the "Looking Ahead by Facing the Past" project, funded by Mennonite Central Committee.

Stopher and his coworkers thought a video contest would generate more interest and diversity of perspectives than simply paying for a professionally produced video.

Other entries included a silent movie called *Trauma*, about a soldier who lives with the memory of his field nurse being gunned down. Another film, *Temporarily Displaced*, is about a dissident who waits in fear as what appear to be government agents enter his house. Another video, called *20 Years Later*, documents the history of the war from the battles on the ground to Croatia's admission into the European Union.

The video project was an opportunity for budding filmmakers to showcase their work for a good cause.

"We wanted to encourage young adults to use their skills and knowledge for social involvement, not just for money," he says.

**Entrants were given one month** to submit their videos, and then, after being reviewed by a panel of judges for content and relevance, they were uploaded onto YouTube. The winner was determined by a weighted system of "views" and "likes," which YouTube tracks.

The contest generated national media interest. One of the winners came from a small town, Stopher says, and his local radio news outlet contacted the War Trauma Center. The staff ended up speaking about the project and the work of the War Trauma Center on live radio.

"The winner let us know that during the voting period, a Bosnian newspaper contacted him, since they had gotten word of the contest and the content," Stopher says. "The newspaper ended up writing a two-page article about the story the filmmaker depicted. It's a relatively unknown story that's very powerful."

Stopher says the staff isn't sure what they'll do for next year's peace project, but the video contest has provided a jumping-off point and sparked new ideas about how to communicate about war trauma and the mission of their organization.

The film *Trauma* can be viewed on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0Ws982D_4Q.—*Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Exhausted couple gets help from volunteers

## Dows tried to cap their household at 25 children, slept with eight infants

Courtney Mast

Mallory Beiler helps out with a game of jump rope at the Dow Family Children's Home in Litein, Kenya.

Though Litein doesn't show up on most maps, three young women serving through Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM)'s GO! program have found their way to this hilly corner of rural Kenya. Courtney Mast, Mallory Beiler, and Olivia Kruis live and work in Litein, helping care for 52 children—orphans, the children of the village prostitute, and children who were simply discarded.

Five years ago, Greg and Mary Rose Dow, an American couple from Mount Joy, Pa., felt God calling them to help vulnerable children in Kenya. They sold their home, took their family of five to Kenya, bought land and set up a home. Children began coming from all directions.

Community leaders brought children who had been abandoned in fields or by the roadside. Aunts and uncles brought children they inherited from deceased family members. Parents brought their own children, hoping to give them to foreigners who might be able to give them a future.

**On a visit to the Mennonite Guest House** in Nairobi last year, Greg told an EMM worker about his family's exhaustion. The Dows had capped the number of children they could care for at 25, but villagers kept bringing more children—children who would clearly die if the Dows refused to accept them.

So the Dows ignored their cap. Soon the home was understaffed and underfunded, and Greg and Mary Rose, who slept with eight infants in their bed each night, were exhausted. EMM offered to use its recruiting networks to find help for the Dows.

Within six months, the first EMM short-term worker arrived at the children's home. Courtney Mast, a Hesston (Kan.) College graduate from Weatherford, Okla., was looking for a year-long assignment with children in Africa. She began working at the Dow Family Children's Home in October 2012.

In January, Mallory Beiler (Mifflinburg, Pa.) and Olivia Kruis (Lititz, Pa.) joined Mast at the home. The three young women share a room in the main house.

Each morning they are given an assignment—a child who needs one-on-one care, or a household task. They change babies' diapers, wash children, wipe noses, bake bread, sing songs, play games and give hugs.

When the Dows visited the Mennonite Guest House again in January, they couldn't stop praising their new helpers.

"They are a piece of cake," Mary Rose says. With trustworthy assistants, the Dows have had a chance to catch their breath, increasing their chances for longevity in mission.

"Supporting like-minded ministries is one of the priorities for EMM East Africa," says Aram DiGennaro, regional representative. "And this is definitely a like-minded ministry. The Dows are providing safety, nutrition and nurture for these children, giving them a chance and hope for the future. We are thrilled to give them a shot in the arm with these three GO! participants."

**Mast, Beiler and Kruis** spend several days each month at the Mennonite Guest House, resting and renewing their energy. EMM long-term workers in East Africa are taking advantage of the opportunity to invest in the three young women during this time away from home, as they struggle with a new culture.

Their time in Nairobi includes one-on-one coffee chats (mentoring) with one of the long-term workers and several hours of daily seminar time focused on spiritual development, relevant topics in cross-cultural ministry and issues of cultural adjustment.

"We secretly hope they will return to the field as long-term missionaries," says DiGennaro. "But even if they don't, we're sowing back into EMM's constituency. When someone does the challenging work of raising their own funds to volunteer, you know God is involved and moving. We want to track with these young people during this important time."

EMM GO! assignments last from two months to a year and vary according to participants' interests and gifts. For more information visit www.emm.org/go.—*Debbi DiGennaro of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

# Bethel College continues connections in Haiti

## Nursing students see lack of supplies, raise $1,200 for bottles, infant formula.

Photo provided

Bethel College senior students Payton Walker, left, and Susan Morris enjoy a meal during their visit to Haiti in December 2012.

Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.)'s Haiti connection continues to strengthen, most recently through two service-related trips by students and faculty.

After fall final exams and before Christmas, seven senior nursing students and one 2012 nursing graduate, along with one of their professors, Geraldine Tyrell, spent a little over a week in the country. All spent most of their time in Hinche, in the central part of Haiti, where Bethel graduate Wildy Mulatre lives with his family and works as a health-care administrator. Doug Siemens, assistant professor of education, was there most recently, Jan. 21-25.

**The nurses were at Hôpital Ste. Therese** in Hinche about four hours per day, doing basic care.

"We divided into two groups,"says Tyrell "so each spent [time] in the men's ward/post-op, pediatrics, some OB and a little time in ICU with one particular patient."

"It was a good cultural experience," says Susan Morris, North Newton. "It was different from nursing in North America. We spent a lot of time sitting around, waiting for something to do. We prepared for the worst, but you can't really imagine what it will be like. They didn't have basic essentials" such as hand sanitizer (the group knew to bring their own), soap or easy access to running—much less hot—water.

One important thing they learned, however, was that Haitian health-care workers are "a lot more resourceful than we are, because they have to be," Morris says.

Examples they saw were an IV bag and tubing made into an irrigating catheter (an expensive item beyond the hospital's budget) and a latex glove used as a tourniquet.

"We really had to focus on providing the best patient care possible [with what we had]," Morris says, and Tyrell adds, "We realized quickly the importance of a smile and a comforting hand."

"Sometimes I couldn't do anything but rub the patient's back," says Hinerman of an experience with labor and delivery. "The next day, the woman sought me out to let me know how much she appreciated that."

With several fund-raisers during fall semester, the students raised $1,200 for bottles and infant formula for mothers who had problems breastfeeding, particularly in the case of premature infants. They also brought 360 lactation kits purchased through the Harvey County (Kan.) Health Department with funding from a United Methodist Church grant to Harvey County Health Ministries.

**The group was gratified to be able** to see some of the supplies put immediately to work. Both Siemens and the nursing students recognized from their short time in Haiti that the barriers to making life better for the average Haitian sometimes seem overwhelming. "Starting small," as Siemens says, may be the only answer for now.—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

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# Sister Care spreads to Guatemala

Karen Flores

Left to right: Rhoda Keener, Olga Piedrasanta, Carolyn Heggen, Ofelia Garcia. Keener and Heggen transferred Sister Care leadership responsibilities in Mexico to Piedrasanta and Garcia in February.

Rhoda Keener, co-director of Mennonite Women USA, and Carolyn Heggen, psychotherapist and teacher, returned from the Sister Care Guatemala Seminar they led together for 61 women Feb. 11-15. It was the first of three Sister Care seminar events slated for Central and South America. What made this trip so poignant was both the impact of the first Spanish Sister Care manual and the passing of the Sister Care leadership torch for the upcoming seminar in Mexico. SC Guatemala welcomed women from eight countries: Bolivia, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico and Guatemala.

**Gloria Chacón of Costa Rica** says: "The training took place amid powerful stories of pain. Many tears were shed, and there was an opportunity to think deeply about important issues, such as accepting ourselves as beloved of God, taking care of and understanding ourselves, learning to set boundaries, listening with compassion and managing stress. It was a healing space for many of us."

Each country representative requested Spanish manuals to take back with her to continue the Sister Care seminar teachings at home. Over 800 Spanish Sister Care manuals were sent along. Two more translation projects sprouted from the new Spanish manuals as well: a translation into Kek'chi (a Mayan language spoken in Guatemala) and a Panamanian manual that will rely heavily on pictures and images, since many of the women recipients are illiterate.

"We feel so very good about the seminar," Heggen says, "with such participatory, warm women who are grateful for the contextualized Spanish manuals and who told us over and over how much they have learned and will share with women in their churches and communities."

SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary, hosted the SC Guatemala event, where pastoral care professor Olga Piedrasanta was the event organizer. Piedrasanta secured funding from Mennonite Central Committee to help women travel to Guatemala from South America and Central America. The Sister Care leadership torch was passed from Keener and Heggen to Piedrasanta and Ofelia Garcia. Garcia is one of Mennonite Women USA's International Women's Fund recipients.

"I experienced something different among us," Garcia says, "new courage and energy to continue breaking new ground. Beside us stands our sister, friend and companion, also taking up the challenges of the kingdom of God. Each is so different and yet we have so many things in common. This space was used to heal pain, express things that perhaps had been stored for a long time. It was a space created with freedom and confidence. The greatest impact of Rhoda and Carolyn has been open hearts, speaking from their own experiences, without masks."

**On the last day of the seminar** series, Keener and Heggen trained Piedrasanta and Garcia for leading the seminar in Mexico. "The handing over of leadership for Mexico to these two Central American women is really powerful," Keener says. In a pinning ceremony, Heggen and Keener removed their Sister Care pins and pinned them to the blouses of Piedrasanta and Garcia. Then the four women prayed.

Piedrasanta and Garcia will present Sister Care May 24-25 in Chihuahua, Mexico, and pass the gift to the next group of women. SC Guatemala was a ministry made available through funding from Mennonite Women USA, Schowalter Foundation, Mennonite Central Committee and the Latin America Committee of the Council of International Anabaptist Ministries.—*Claire DeBerg of Mennonite Women USA*

# Smoking, drugs, suicide and Mennonites

## Public service announcements spark calls of desperation to Newton, Kan., office.

In the midst of callers wanting information on the newest Vacation Bible School materials, *Gather 'Round* children's curriculum or *Mennonite Girls Can Cook Celebrations*, the customer service staff handling most calls to MennoMedia in Newton, Kan., are sometimes caught off guard. That's when they find themselves talking to a mother desperate to find help for a depressed, suicidal or drug addicted son, daughter or other relative.

And now, thanks to public service announcements on addictive substances such as drugs, alcohol and cigarettes that are airing heavily in the first six months of 2013, people are turning to the Mennonite church for help to stop smoking, too.

*Never Too Late: Hope for Addictions* 30-second and 60-second messages are airing on at least 132 stations across the United States (a number which includes only stations that send response cards or emails reporting on their use).

**Using data from the cards** and figuring conservatively, there will be at least 31,896 exposures of these spots over this year in 32 states, including the larger cities of Los Angeles; Las Vegas, Nev.; Phoenix; Nashville, Tenn.; Washington, D.C.; Spokane, Wash.; Oklahoma City; Birmingham, Ala.; and Charlotte, N.C. Dollar value for airtime for these exposures on 132 stations is lowballed at $250,000 to $500,000, time that is donated by the stations. "We calculate that probably double that number of stations use the spots and never let us know, so the dollar value of the spots airing is probably closer to at least $1 million," says Russ Eanes, executive director of MennoMedia.

"People have only a vague or fuzzy idea of what they've heard when they call, so sometimes they are expecting more help than the booklets we offer on the spots," says producer Melodie Davis. To date, 30 people have called in response to the addictions spots. Last year, a smaller number of stations were airing public service radio spots from MennoMedia on grief and mental illness, which prompted 41 calls during the year.

The spots feature actual people telling their stories of pain, addiction, stigma, loss of family and friends. "We are grateful to the major funder for this project, Schowalter Foundation, which enabled us to reach out to likely millions of listeners," says Steve Carpenter, development director for MennoMedia. The spots also utilize original interviews first conducted for the documentary *Finding Hope in Recovery*, which received substantial funding from Odyssey Networks.

**The spots end with a variety of tags** to MennoMedia websites, with resources on issues cited; some have an 800 number listeners can call for MennoMedia's pastoral care pamphlets as well as for purchased resources. Some spots simply end with, "This message from the Mennonite churches."

Two on-air web addresses offer substantial follow-up to listeners at www.FindingHopeInRecovery.com and www.ShapingFamilies.com/Alcohol and www.ShapingFamilies.com/Drugs.—*MennoMedia staff*

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# Mennonite Church Canada finances down

## Preliminary report says 2012 contributions 6.75 percent lower than budgeted.

Gordon Allaby is grateful for the services Mennonite Church Canada provides. But he is deeply concerned about how charitable giving is changing.

"The church is not just another charity," he says. "We're doing the work of God here," he says, noting that Mennonite Church Saskatchewan also has its financial challenges.

Osler (Saskatchewan) Mennonite Church, where Allaby is pastor, is geographically distant from his wider church offices, so he frequently uses resources provided by Mennonite Church Canada that are freely available by phone and via the internet. He notes that his congregants have a high degree of trust in these resources.

"They know that important issues of the day have received disciplined discernment in a wider community. This sharing of wisdom is a great gift."

In his church's monthly newsletters, readers are often referred to links on Mennonite Church Canada's website, where congregants can get the wider church's voice on the interplay of current events and what they mean for Mennonites seeking to be faithful.

But Allaby expresses surprise and sadness to learn that Mennonite Church Canada is facing a $237,000 shortfall in donation income for the fiscal year just ended, on Jan. 31.

"I agree with Paul, who said the church is the body of Christ. I want to be in this body. I want to give to this body and be a part of where God is leading us," he says.

Financial support of Mennonite Church Canada's national church ministries continued its eight-year declining trend in 2012. Preliminary figures indicate that the combined giving of congregations and individual and corporate donors was down a total of $237,000—6.75 percent below budgeted income in 2012, says chief administrative officer Vic Thiessen.

A dip in individual and corporate giving was already evident in September 2012, says Thiessen. In response, staff conducted a phone campaign, a direct mail campaign and increased personal visits during the fall of 2012.

By mid-December 2012, contacts with individual and corporate donors made it clear that a giving shortfall of $159,000 was unlikely to be reversed before the year's end. An unanticipated additional shortfall of $78,000 from congregations became evident in January as congregations closed their books for the year.—*Dan Dyck for Mennonite Church Canada News*

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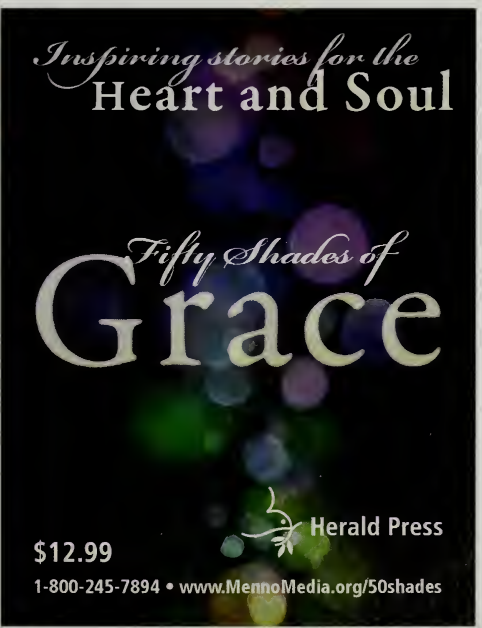

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# Pastoral care through Facebook?

## Church leaders are navigating social media use in their churches.

Pastor Jennifer Gingerich decided to conduct a type of Facebook experiment. She started as interim pastoral team member in August 2012 at Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Prior to this position, she did not use Facebook frequently. However, she soon discovered that a lot of Assembly Church members post pastoral concerns as Facebook status updates, especially with the number of losses and transition in the congregation.

Jennifer Gingerich

"I'm here for a year, so I am going to engage with Facebook as a pastor for that year," she says.

Depending on the type of concern, she posts back on their Facebook wall, sends an email or makes an effort to touch base in person with the individual.

Should we allow teenagers to view videos on smartphones while volunteering in childcare during congregational meetings?—Jennifer Gingerich

"I try to be really sensitive with my responses," Gingerich says. Overall, the experiment builds her connections with congregants as she discovers their interests, vocation news and family activities.

Facebook has its drawbacks, however. One is often an observer, not a participant, she says.

"[Facebook] can be a way to follow people's lives without them knowing about it," Gingerich says.

Joanna Harader, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan., also uses Facebook to learn about her church members and their lives.

As a pastor of a small church, Harader is Facebook friends with most people at Peace.

She says Facebook offers a special tool for pastoral care, as sometimes individuals will post a significant life occurrence on Facebook and may not announce it anywhere else.

Harader also describes the "farther reach" as one advantage of Facebook. For example, a lot of the students away at college use Facebook messaging with Harader.

Some individuals consider Harader their pastor, and she corresponds with them online, but they do not attend Peace Mennonite or another church regularly due to proximity or baggage they have with church.

"It allows [me] to speak with and minister to people who would not be a part of a traditional church," she says.

Jim Miller, pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., also uses Facebook to relate to the more transient individuals involved with Covenant, such as young adults and winter residents.

Covenant also established the "Friends of Covenant" term for people connected to the church but for one reason or another feel unable to participate regularly on Sundays in person.

Facebook offers a way for these individuals to experience the community through photos or church news posted, Miller says.

However, Miller says, the church considers how much to share online. For example, during the Epiphany Sunday service they held an anointing with water.

"It was intimate and powerful for those present," he says. "Looking over the photos from the service, we had to decide what to share and what not to share. We kept out any of those that were too intimate."

Jim Miller

Pastor Leonard Dow of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia also considers these issues, as Facebook can be a free for all, he says.

"That can be a blessing, as people are interacting, but can be a challenge when the page becomes an opportunity to prove a point," he says. "Facebook can be a polarizing place if we try to 'convince' one another."

A few times, Dow has stepped in and reminded people to post articles related to politics, elections or gun control on their personal pages, not the church page.

"If it's on the church page, it's like the church endorses it," he says. "We don't try to avoid the issues, but we try to approach them from a Christ-centric perspective."

Prayer remains a significant component of Dow's Facebook use.

"Weekly or biweekly, I post a question asking for prayer requests," he says. "I'm amazed at the number of people who respond."

He provides the option for individuals to post publicly or privately message him, depending on the type of request. Then Dow spends time in prayer surrounding those posts and messages, and he might try to interact with those who send messages.

"One of the key responsibilities [of pastors] is to be praying," he says. "[Facebook] gives me the opportunity to engage in that."

Oxford Circle's worship team also uses Facebook to teach and disperse the worship music.

"When there is a new song, they will post a YouTube video of it to the church's Facebook page," he says. "If it's a new song, people can also express that they were blessed by the song through Facebook."

Oxford Circle also utilizes the church Facebook page during intense care issues or emergencies.

"Instead of a phone tree or email, people will post updates on the church page," Dow says. This allows everyone to feel ownership and engaged in church life, instead of "always tapping the same people" to help, he adds.

Leonard Dow

Finally, Dow says that despite all the advantages, Facebook is not a place to build community.

"It can be an added value, but … building community happens in person," he says.

As a church, Gingerich says similar questions regarding technology arise. For example, do we allow youth to text during youth group? Should we allow teenagers to view videos on smartphones while volunteering in child care during congregational meetings? Assembly Mennonite members consider having a Sunday school elective to examine these questions and related issues.

On a personal level, Gingerich acknowledges that her Facebook experiment could compromise her time management as a pastor. One way to create boundaries, she says, is to create a favorites list of only Assembly attendees. When she logs on to Facebook at work, the newsfeed only includes posts from those individuals.

When there is a new song, they will post a YouTube video of it to the church's Facebook page. If it's a new song, people can also express that they were blessed by the song through Facebook.—Leonard Dow

This way she is focused on the 200 people from church. "I catch up, pay attention and let it go," she says.

Pastor Harader follows another guideline to keep social media from dominating her office hours.

"From the time worship begins on Sunday to noon on Monday, I try to stay off Facebook, blogging and email," she says. "I don't follow this rule 100 percent, but I try."

Dow says he tries to limit his Facebook time to once in the morning, over lunch and at the end of the day for a total of about 45 minutes. Praying for requests made on Facebook does not replace the importance of his prayer walks in the community, he says.—*Anna Groff*

## Politics, pastors and Facebook

One regret I have had as a Mennonite pastor is sharing too much opinion, albeit subtle at times, in my Facebook posts. Sadly, it even resulted in a couple leaving my congregation because they suspected I was not as conservative or outspoken on a moral issue they are firmly settled on (turns out we are not too far apart, actually).

I found in the recent election that it was best to refrain from much posting about the candidates. I have both quite liberal friends and very conservative friends on Facebook. The conservative friends seem to post the most on issues dear to them. There is the temptation, at least for me, to want to share thoughts on Facebook, since I am a rather conversational person, but I have come to the conclusion that pastors need to establish a higher standard for themselves and either not share controversial issues or even refrain from being on Facebook altogether. I hope I can keep faithful in that area; I'm sure I will be tempted to post again on one issue or another. There have been moments when I envied a pastor friend who does not have a Facebook page, thinking, He's smart.—*Tim Schultz , pastor of Aurora (Ohio) Mennonite Church*

## New Media Project

### Q#1: purpose of network (top 7 responses)

- 32 networks are for the purpose of **friendship** (46%)
- 14 networks are for **preaching and sermon** assistance and feedback (20%)
- 14 networks for **idea and vision sharing** (20%)
- 12 networks for **professional networking**
- 11 networks for **news and information**
- 9 for **event advertising and publicity**
- 9 for **support of various kinds**

Source: The New Media Project, based at Union Theological Seminary, surveyed young clergy members in May 2011 to learn how they used social media in their ministries.

## RESOURCES

**Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works** by James K.A. Smith (BakerAcademic, 2013, $22.99) helps us understand and appreciate the bodily basis of habit formation and how liturgical formation—both "secular" and Christian—affects our fundamental orientation to the world. This is the second of a three-volume theology of culture.

**Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games** by Kevin Schut (Brazos Press, 2013, $16.99) offers a lively, balanced and informed Christian evaluation of video games and video game culture. Schut encourages readers to consider both the perils and promise of this major cultural phenomenon.

**A Peaceable Hope: Contesting Violent Eschatology in New Testament Narratives** by David J. Neville (BakerAcademic, 2013, $24.99) explores the narrative sections of the New Testament—the Gospels, Acts and Revelation—with a view to developing a peaceable, as opposed to retributive, understanding of New Testament eschatology.

**Monseñor Romero: Memories in Mosaic** by María López Vigil (Orbis Books, 2013, $30) is a collectively painted portrait of El Salvador's beloved archbishop Oscar Romero (1917-1980), who took his place in history as a voice for the poor in the turbulent times leading up to El Salvador's civil war and who ultimately offered the sacrifice of his life.

**Resurrection City: A Theology of Improvisation** by Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Eerdmans, 2012, $25) paints a picture of evangelical Christianity that eschews a majority mentality and instead fights against racism, inequality and injustice, embracing the concerns of the poor and marginalized, just as Jesus did.

**The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision Is Key to the World's Future** by David P. Gushee (Eerdmans, 2013, $35) traces the concept of the sacredness of human life from Scripture through church history to the present day.

**Citizenship: Paul on Peace and Politics** by Gordon Mark Zerbe (CMU Press, 2012, $26) is a collection of essays that offers a revisiting of Paul's theological vision and practical activism around the theme of citizenship.

**The Petals of a Kansas Sunflower: A Mennonite Diaspora** by Melvin D. Epp (Resource Publications, 2013, $54) combines stories, photos and personal reminiscences around the collected poems of Epp's mother, who reared eight children as a farm wife on the Kansas prairie.

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## CALENDAR

**The 24th annual gathering of Connecting Families** will be held May 17-19 at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa. For more information or to request a registration packet, please contact Forrest Moyer at 215-589-4727; email forrest.moyer@yahoo.com. Deadline for registration is April 17.

## WORKERS

**Florer-Bixler, Melissa**, was licensed at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, Chapel Hill, N.C., on Jan. 27. Melissa currently serves as pastoral assistant at Raleigh Moravian Church, Raleigh, N.C.

**Nguyen, Peter H.**, was ordained as associate pastor of Vietnamese Mennonite Church, Philadelphia, Pa., on March 3.

## OBITUARIES

**Brilhart, Marnetta Yake**, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 5. Spouse: Earl Brilhart (deceased). Parents: Clayton F. and Martha Eby Yake. Children: Ted, Kathleen Repko, Dan. Funeral: Feb. 16 at The Meetinghouse at Greencroft, Goshen.

**Buckwalter, Miriam E. Bair**, 85, Lititz, Pa., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Leon H. Buckwalter (deceased). Parents: H. Landis and Elizabeth Mellinger Bair. Children: L. Herbert, Frederic N., Dana B. Carson, Lori L. Klassen; four grandchildren; two grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 19 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

**Bumbaugh, Brownie Virginia Hartman**, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., died Feb. 4. Parents: Dan and Lena Hartman. Children: Eddie, Sherry McKie, Becki Witt; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg.

**Cardell, Lydia Arlene Byler**, 89, Hatfield, Pa., died Feb. 17. Spouse: Thomas Cardell (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Lizzie Yoder Byler. Funeral: Feb. 25 at Sadler-Suess Funeral Home, Telford, Pa.

**Detweiler, Betty Jean Halteman**, 58, Harleysville, Pa., died Feb. 6, of cancer. Spouse: Laverne H. Detweiler. Parents: Raymond N. and Mary S. Godshall Halteman. Children: Adam, Anthony; two grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 10 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

**Detwiler, Dorothy L. Ziegler**, 86, Telford, Pa., died Feb. 22. Spouse: Stanley F. Detwiler. Parents: Clarence and Lizzie Landis Ziegler. Children: Donald Z., Vernon Z., Leon Z., Steven Z., Brenda Sue Detwiler; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 27 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

**Doerksen, Esther Evelyn Enns**, 100, Inman, Kan., died Jan. 10. Spouse: Jacob T. Doerksen (deceased). Parents: D.J. and Anna Wiens Enns. Children: Lois Doerksen, Ann Epp, Ruth Gaeddert, Fern Froese, Jim, Marlene Doerksen; 15 grandchildren; 35 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 14 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**Emmons, Barbara Dirkse**, 77, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 25. Spouse: Bruce Emmons (deceased). Parents: Richard and Letha Root Dirkse. Children: Lauren Emmons, Larry, Ramon; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 4 at Fairlawn Chapel, Archbold.

**Gahman, Ruth W. Detweiler**, 83, Perkasie, Pa., died Jan. 30. Spouse: Monroe T. Gahman (deceased). Parents: Clayton and Alice W. Wismer Detweiler. Children: Patria Bolton, Eva Yoder, Kermit, James, Wilbur, R. Duane; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 4 at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasie, Pa.

**Gehman, Orpha C.**, 86, Bally, Pa., died Jan. 3. Parents: Jakob H. and Katie Clemmer Gehman. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Boyertown Mennonite Church, Boyertown, Pa.

**Gochnauer, Anna Myrtle Bowers**, 91, Mount Joy, Pa., died Dec. 6, 2012. Spouse: John B. Gochnauer (deceased). Parents: Donald, Anna Mary Knier, John R., David E.; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 10 at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

**Godshall, Paul A.**, 98, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 18. Spouse: Stella B. Moyer Godshall (deceased). Parents: Enos D. and Catherine Allebach Godshall. Children: Miriam M. Godshall, Lourene G. Bender, Stanley M., Philip M.; 11 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Souderton Mennonite Homes, Souderton.

**Gunden, Evelyn**, 79, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 5. Parents: Lloyd and Erma Brutcher Rocke. Children: Sherri King, Kent, Carla Gunden, Marla Peak, Dennis; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**Halteman, Mary S. Godshall**, 87, Harleysville, Pa., died Feb. 4. Spouse: Raymond N. Halteman (deceased). Parents: Alvin and Susan Springer Godshall. Children: Alvin Ray, Robert G., Janet Michener, Carol Sue Clemmer, Dennis, Betty J. Detweiler, Donald; 14 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

**Hampton, Susan Blanche**, 59, Penn Laird, Va., died Feb. 3. Parents: Wade Kenneth and Lillian G. Hampton. Feb. 8 at Kyger Funeral Home Chapel, Harrisonburg, Va.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Juhnke, Janet Ann**, 70, Salina, Kan., died Jan. 23. Spouse: Ted Hale. Parents: William E. and Meta Goering Juhnke. Children: Elizabeth Bushman, Eugene Hale; four grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 5 at University United Methodist Church, Salina.

**Kehler, Margaret Gerbrandt**, 87, Altona, Manitoba, died Feb. 9. Spouse: Jacob K. Kehler (deceased). Parents: John and Aganetha Gerbrandt. Children: Betty, Verna, Linda, Rose, Gloria; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 16 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**King, Elsie "Ruth" Brackbill**, 90, Ephrata, Pa., died Nov. 30, 2012, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Emery Daniel King (deceased). Parents: Harry Good Brackbill and Myrtle Maynard Haldeman Brackbill. Children: Harry, Ralph, Lois Huston, David, Daniel; 14 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 7 at Frazer Mennonite Church, Frazer, Pa., and Dec. 8 at Mountain View Mennonite Fellowship, Bodines, Pa.

**Koppes, Effie Myrtle Schmidt**, 98, North Newton, Kan., died Dec. 10, 2012. Spouse: Clinton C. Koppes. Parents: John J. and Effie Wedel Schmidt. Children: Duane, Clayton, Barbara Beal; one granddaughter. Funeral: Dec. 14 at Broadway Colonial Funeral Home, Newton, Kan.

**Krueger, Carol Jaquilene**, 67, Altona, Manitoba, died Feb. 13. Parents: Jake and Anne Krueger. Funeral: Feb. 19 at Berthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Kurtz, Alta Martin**, 86, Chandler, Texas, died Feb. 16. Spouse: Albert Kurtz (deceased). Parents: Enos and Anna Martin. Children: Duane, Janice Lowman; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

**Landis, Clarence Lewis**, 86, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 14, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Marie H. Landis Landis. Parents: Weston and Ada Lewis Landis. Children: Dennis, Richard, Jon, Weston, Gerald, Lucy Landis, Lori Westover, Lena Leatherman; 19 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 19 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

**Lilley, Charles C.**, 80, Franconia Township, Pa., died Feb. 6. Spouse: Shirley Ann Bergey Lilley. Parents: Norman and Catherine Lilley. Children: Linda A. Martin, Eileen K. Souder, C. Leslie, Cheryl Benner; nine grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 10 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

**Linberger, Lamar L.**, 80, Lansdale, Pa., died Feb. 22. Spouse: Peggy J. Detwiler Linberger. Parents: Edwin J. and Edna G. Beck Linberger. Children: Dennis, Rick, Carla Moyer; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 27 at Grace Mennonite Church, Lansdale.

**Marner, Wanda M. White**, 94, Hesston, Kan., died Feb. 5. Spouse: Max D. Marner. Parents: William R. and Lena Miller White. Children: Wilbur, Colleen Beaudoin; four grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Miller, Carol Maxine Beller**, 93, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 17. Spouse: Carl Samuel Miller. Parents: Peter William and Mattie Stalter Beller. Children: Carl S., Jr., Peter W., Evan J.; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 22 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Miller, Ernest J.**, 93, Shipshewana, Ind., died Feb. 24. Spouse: Ruth K. Mishler Miller (deceased). Parents: Irwin J. and Mabel Yoder Miller. Children: Dewayne, Gerald Keith, Franklin J., Ralph Edward, Dennis Kalb, Jennifer Kay Miller; eight grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 1 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

**Nissley, John Robert**, 46, Ephrata, Pa., died Jan. 15. Spouse: Leslie Elizabeth Nissley. Parents: John R. and Lorraine Bobb Moore. Children: John William Nissley, Emily Nissley. Funeral: Jan. 21 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

**Overholt, Ima Hershberger**, 92, Walnut Creek, Ohio, and Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 29. Spouse: Homer Overholt (deceased). Parents: Dan and Lizzie Hershberger. Children: Cleo Diane Fisher, Patricia Yoder, Phillip, Anthony; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 1 in Goshen.

**Peachey, Helen Burkhart**, 101, Ephrata, Pa., died Jan. 5. Spouse: Chester J. Peachey (deceased). Parents: John and Hettie Myer Burkhart. Children: Dale L., Kenneth E.H. Sharlene Peachey; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Jan. 11 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

**Pickerill, Paula J. Troyer**, 58, Milford, Neb., died Feb. 11, of pulmonary hypertension. Spouse: Dan Pickerill. Parents: Royden and Doreen Stutzman Troyer. Children: Travis, Troy, Toby. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

**Schulz, Bernard "Ben,"** 88, Altona, Manitoba, died Feb. 7. Parents: Bishop David and Katherina Schulz. Funeral: Feb. 12 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Short, Lucille Lantz**, 101, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 14. Spouse: Jesse Short (deceased). Parents: William and Sarah Lantz. Children: James, Lynda Rychener, Gregory; 17 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 18 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Smit, Anna Ruby Derksen**, 90, Mountain Lake, Minn., died Jan. 28. Spouse: William Smit (deceased). Parents: Jacob J. and Anna R. Steinle Derksen. Children: Stanley, Steven, Marlene Woods, Merle, Shirley Bottin, Irma Korthouse; 12 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 1 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

**Snyder, Arlene Brenneman**, 86, Kalona, Iowa, died Jan. 25. Spouse: John Snyder. Parents: Erlis and Martha Marner Brenneman. Children: Steve, Daniel, Rita Wimberly; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 28 at First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, Iowa.

**Sommers, Betty Jean Edinger**, 87, Bluffton, Ohio, died Feb. 2. Wesley Sommers (deceased). Parents: Scott and Emma May Burkholder Edinger. Children: Bruce, John, Phillip, Kevin, Mark; 10 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 5 at Chiles and Sons Laman Funeral Home, Bluffton.

**Stamm, Paul Gustav**, 97, Waldron, Mich., died Jan. 27. Spouse: Delilah Birky Stamm. Parents: Gustav and Priscilla Stuckey Stamm. Children: Ina Bird, Bonnie Gingerich, Nancy Hall, Ron, Barb Stamm; 12 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 3 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

**Steria, Elmer James**, 96, San Diego, Calif., died Jan. 11. Spouse: Grace Zehr Steria. Children: Gary, Calvin, Martha, Paul, Elmer, Jr., Stephen; numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held in the spring at Croghan Mennonite Church, Croghan, N.Y..

**Sterner, Grace C. Heil**, 91, Allentown, Pa., died Jan. 24. Spouse: Uriah H. Sterner (deceased). Parents: Roscoe J. and Minnie M. Leibold Sterner. Children: Janet, Alan, Donna, Tommy Benner; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Trexler Funeral Home, Allentown.

**Sweigart, Earl L.**, 81, Balko, Okla., died Jan. 14. Spouse: Winifred Snyder Sweigart. Parents: Milton and Effie Kauffman Sweigart. Children: David, Cara Wilkens, Anna Patzkowsky, Susan Cohlmia; 10 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Perryton Mennonite Church.

**Unruh, Allison Arlo**, 90, Perryton, Texas, died Dec. 26, 2012. Spouse: Ruby Schrag Unruh. Parents: David and Anna Unruh. Children: Barbara Ewy, Shirley Hitt; two grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at Perryton Mennonite Church.

**VanLake, Virginia "Ginny" Sue Bloom**, 64, Mishawaka, Ind., died Feb. 1. Spouse: Gary VanLake. Parents: Millard H. "Joe" and Virginia Williams Bloom. Children: Laura Brandenburg, Michelle Shelley, Angela Buck; nine grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind.

**Weaver, Etta C. Buzzard**, 97, Wakarusa, Ind., died Jan. 26. Spouse: Otis L. Weaver (deceased). Parents: John F. Buzzard and Clara Etta Dausman Buzzard. Children: Charlene Farmwald, Carolyn Graber, Jan Ramer, Kenneth, Ron; 13 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 2 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

**Weber, Audrey Lorraine Bauman**, 87, Floradale, Ontario, died Jan. 24. Spouse: Gordon Weber. Parents: Dan and Pearl Bauman. Children: Stuart, Murray, Robert; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 27 at Floradale Mennonite Church.

**Wenger, Anna Frances "Fran" Zimmerman**, 79, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 2. Spouse: Marion R. Wenger. Parents: Eli B. and Mary Ellen Martin Zimmerman. Children: Mark, Joel, Maria Wenger; five grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 6 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Yoder, Elizabeth A.**, 87, Leola, Pa., died Feb. 3. Parents: Levi A. and Cora E. Yoder Yoder. Memorial service: March 9 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola.

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**Harrisonburg Mennonite Church**, Harrisonburg, Va., seeks full-time ***youth and young adult director***. Master of Divinity degree and ministry experience is preferred. Interested candidates may contact the head pastor, Craig Maven, at cmaven@hmcchurch.org or 540-434-4463, ext 104.

**Rainbow Mennonite Church** (Kansas City, Kan.), a talented, diverse, growing urban church (262 members) seeks a new pastor(s) to begin September 2013. The congregation has identified five goals in its visioning document: Congregational Support Throughout the Life Span, Children and Youth Ministry, Church Growth, Community Service Programs, Variation in Worship. The gift of encouraging openness and inclusiveness in relating to congregational diversity is expected as well as a strong commitment to Anabaptist teachings. Please contact Ky Stoltzfus; email stoltzkb@gmail.com; or phone 913-236-8820.

***Associate pastor*****: Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church** (adjacent to the campus of Hesston College) is seeking an associate pastoral staff member with emphasis on youth ministry. Responsibilities include nurturing spiritual growth and faith commitment, resourcing Christian education ministries and developing lay leadership. EOE. Send cover letter and resume to Kent Rychener (kentr@hesstonmc.org) or 309 S. Main, Hesston, KS 67062.

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# How to encourage one another

**Sherah-Leigh Gerber** attends Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church and is coordinator of volunteers for Ohio Conference. She lives in Apple Creek, Ohio, with her husband and toddler daughter.

Through my work for Ohio Conference and connection with the Anabaptist Missional Project, I have the opportunity to interact with Mennonites from many different congregations in all parts of the country. One significant concern I hear repeatedly is the desire for more young adults to be engaged in the church; I even hear this in places where young adults are involved and well represented.

We've all read the data and heard the many reasons why there is a lack (real or perceived) of young adults in the church. In the past few months, I witnessed multiple situations that illustrate why young people don't feel wanted, appreciated or welcomed:

- (To someone married four months): "You realize, your parents are the only ones in our Sunday school class without grandchildren. You should get on that."
- (To someone in their late 20s): "Well, you did get married at an old age."
- (To someone mid-20s): "Too bad you are the only grandchild your grandfather will not get to see get married."
- (To parents of a 2-year-old): "It seems that new parents these days act so inconvenienced by their children. In our day, we gladly made adjustments and sacrifices for our children."
- (To someone in their first job): "Well, once you work in the 'real world,' you'll understand."
- (When considering someone in their 20s for a position in the larger church): "At her age, how could she have any real leadership experiences? This would be too big of a responsibility."
- (To a young pastor, repeated): "But we've never done it that way before."

We've all said something during an awkward pause, then realized it sounded wrong. And I imagine these comments were made with the intention of connecting with the other person. But we need to be thoughtful in how we try to build relationships and offer encouragement. Consider the following:

- **Know (and use) people's names** (especially young people returning from college or from a service trip). It means so much to realize that other adults in the congregation know who you are. There is such power in hearing your name spoken. We should not underestimate the significance of being known in a community.
- **Don't expect everyone's end goal is marriage and/or children.** Both are blessings. And many people do long for these traditional milestones. However, it takes two, and sometimes the pieces are not fitting together. Affirm other gifts and goals in a person's life. He or she may be content or feel called to a life of singleness. When my husband and I were struggling with infertility, people's (I assume) well-intentioned comments often felt hurtful.
- **Give leadership opportunities.** Yes, it can be a risk, but many young adults are gifted and capable of taking on significant leadership roles. Often within their profession they have been given much responsibility. Why are we so hesitant to extend the same opportunities in the church? The only way to gain experience is to have opportunities to lead. By finding ways to allow young adults to use their gifts, you are shaping the church—both the present ministry and the future. Those who feel valued and have a way to contribute are more likely to stay connected. And, practically speaking, you're not going to sleep in on the Sunday you are teaching class or leading the children's time.
- **Be open to new ideas or ways of doing things.** If you do invite someone to lead a ministry team, the group should also then be open to applying the suggestions and ideas that new people or younger perspectives bring.
- **Listen for what you can learn.** Yes, young people have a lot to learn, and mentoring relationships are great. Advice and counsel are also helpful, particularly at significant discernment points on the journey. However, consider that you may be inspired, challenged or encouraged by a friendship with someone from a younger generation.

What do you value about the church community? What made it a welcoming and comfortable place for you as a young adult? Now? How would you like to be cared for and included? How might those things translate into the hospitality and care you offer others no matter what age or stage in life?

By building relationships with each other in authentic community and through shared leadership we can enrich the ministry of our congregations and bring forth the kingdom of God. TM

> By finding ways to allow young adults to use their gifts, you are shaping the church—both the present ministry and the future.

# Documentaries take us to other worlds

Every year, filmmakers from around the world produce documentaries that introduce us to worlds we may not encounter otherwise. These films serve not only to inform or teach us but to move us and even lead us to action.

I want to look at three recent documentary films now available on DVD (or through streaming). Each of these films is shot with skill and care, often on a meager budget.

*Searching for Sugar Man* (PG-13), which won this year's Oscar for best documentary, tells the bizarre story of Sixto Rodriguez, a Detroit folksinger who had a short-lived recording career in the early 1970s with two well-reviewed albums that didn't sell. Unknown to him, he became a pop music icon and inspiration for generations in South Africa.

The film interviews a music journalist who used hints from song lyrics to track down where Rodriguez had lived. He was able to dispel rumors that Rodriguez had committed suicide.

Eventually fans locate Rodriguez, who goes to South Africa and plays to sellout crowds of thousands. But the film testifies to this musician's humility and concern for justice. He remains a simple laborer who lives in the same house in Detroit for 40 years.

*Detropia* (NR, a combination of "Detroit" and "utopia") looks at the economic decline in Detroit due mostly to the long-term changes in the automobile industry. Rather than offer narration, it primarily follows three Detroit residents: a video blogger, a nightclub owner and a United Auto Workers local president. All three are African Americans who articulate well both the difficulties they face and the hope they carry that things will improve.

The film recounts the huge changes over the decades. For example, in 1930, Detroit was the fastest-growing city in the country; in 2010, it was the fastest-declining city. We learn of 100,000 houses being torn down.

We see up close the effects of this decline on these and many other residents. The film shows their anger and their determination to remain in their city and help it survive.

An artist couple represents the growing number of younger people moving into the city's center, buying up houses at vastly reduced prices. And the Detroit Opera is part of the revitalization going on there.

*5 Broken Cameras* (NR), co-directed by Palestinian Emad Burnat and Israeli Guy Davidi, is the remarkable firsthand account of protests in Bil'in, a West Bank village affected by the Israeli West Bank barrier.

Burnat shot most of the footage on five different cameras, and the film is divided into the periods of those cameras and recounts how each was broken, either smashed or shot.

Burnat gets his first camera in 2005 to record the birth of his youngest son, Gibreel. At the same time, a barrier is being built on village land that will isolate the village from much of its farmland, which the Israelis will then confiscate to build a settlement. The villagers begin to resist this decision through nonviolent protests.

These protests continue through the next five years, and Burnat records them, obtaining damning evidence of the shameful actions of Israeli soldiers, including shooting to death several people, including an 11-year-old boy.

Burnat calls healing a challenge and says "it is a victim's obligation to heal. By healing you resist oppression," he says. "Forgotten wounds can't be healed, so I film to heal." These Palestinians' courage and ability to remain nonviolent stands out in this powerful film. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

## FILM REVIEW

**Amour** (PG-13) (French for "love") tells the story of an elderly couple in Paris, Anne and Georges, who are retired music teachers. Anne suffers a stroke and makes Georges promise he won't send her back to the hospital or to a nursing home. This masterful film, which won this year's Oscar for best foreign-language film, takes us through the agonizing process of a loved one's dying. It shows the ugliness and pain of that process.—*Gordon Houser*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**A Different Kind of Cell: The Story of a Murderer Who Became a Monk** by W. Paul Jones (Eerdmans, 2011, $14) tells the powerful story of Clayton Anthony Fountain, convicted of five violent murders and condemned in 1974 to live out his days in solitary confinement at the highest-security prison in the United States. After his profound spiritual transformation, Jones served as his spiritual adviser for six years until Fountain's sudden death in 2004.—*gh*

**The Power of All: Building a Multivoiced Church** by Sian and Stuart Murray Williams (Herald Press, 2012, $15.99) sees God working in churches that encourage the participation of all members. Such participation usually attend renewal movements throughout history, they write.—*gh*

**Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations** by Sergius Bulgakov (Eerdmans, 2012, $48) is "an organic articulation, a symphonic connection" that ties philosophy and theology to Orthodox thought. Bulgakov, a Russian, is widely regarded as the 20th century's leading Orthodox theologian. This tome, though often wordy, addresses the nature of religious consciousness, the Divine, the world and the human being through the lens of Scripture, the Church Fathers, mystical texts, ancient and modern philosophy, and modern economic thought. Faith, he writes, "does not place philosophizing reason under suspicion but sets it its own task and creates a special stimulus for reality."—*gh*

*(Continued from page 5)*

I entered Hesston (Kan.) Academy in the fall of 1951, just when Mennonite Church leaders had become worried that their young people were losing their grasp on "nonconformity," which I, as a General Conference Mennonite, had never heard about.

"Nonconformity Week" was observed the third week of September at Hesston. All 23 of us high school freshmen sat in a circle in Charles Hall discussing nonconformity for one hour every day that week, on a rotating schedule. Marilyn, the daughter of president Milo Kauffman, sat to my left. I was totally at sea in a strange place with no idea of what we were talking about. I soon learned that the overriding issue was that of bobby socks—which the girls were wearing over their sheer nylon hose—creating the illusion that they were walking around bare-legged. The rules stated that if nylon hose were worn, they must be the kind that had the seam running up the back of the girl's leg, making it plain to see that her legs were indeed covered.

I had been unable to get involved in this strange discussion. On the fourth day or so, Marilyn turned to me and said, "Melvin, you have been sitting here all week, saying nothing. Which do you prefer, sheer nylons that make it look like the girl's legs are bare, or hose with the seam running up the back?" Totally embarrassed, I finally blurted, "I like 'em both ways."

Marilyn rolled her eyes and said, "Oh you GCs. You're all alike."

Fast forward to the 1980s, when I was pastor of First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio. Marilyn came to visit us, representing the Commission on Home Ministries. I introduced her to the congregation by recounting the story from 1951. Marilyn was up to the task. She took her place in the middle of the chancel, turned her back to the congregation, lifted her skirt and said in a loud voice: "See, I want you all to know that my legs are covered." *—Melvin D. Schmidt, Hyattsville, Md.*

### Pre-emptive report not helpful

We, the co-chairs of the Harrisonburg District of the Virginia Mennonite Conference, found it unhelpful that *The Mennonite* published the personal blog from Andrew Jenner about the three-year process at Community Mennonite Church before any district or conference process could occur. Many congregations in the district had not yet received information about CMC's process before this blog was published by *The Mennonite*. In our perspective, pre-emptive publication of this news from an outside source, lacking nuance and context, did not serve well our churches, district, conference and ultimately the Mennonite Church USA. *—Alicia Horst and Lawrence M. Yoder, co-chairs of Harrisonburg district, Virginia Mennonite Conference*

### Kraybill gave us a gift

Nelson Kraybill gave us wise help in his "Shalom Arc" article (March) as he laid out the 12 stages the early church used in Acts 15 as they worked through a major shift in practice. He also sketched what those stages might look like for our church today.

This is timely. The author immediately preceding Kraybill and one several pages later suggest that we as a church should be changing our stance on committed same-sex relationships.

Kraybill also gave us a gift with his balanced caution that, although the church opted for substantial change in Acts 15, there were also "multiple cases in the New Testament when leaders did not embrace ethical or spiritual innovation."*—Harold Miller, Broadway, Va.*

### Disturbingly beautiful article

Regarding the profile of Mark Van Steenwyk (February): It was a stirring breath of fresh air in a Mennonite world where we often find ourselves justifying wealth and holding fast to safety and comfort. Mark and his merry band of fellow "followers of Jesus" raise provocative and disturbing questions. These questions have some clear answers, but these answers are not easy to live out in real life.

My wife, Joyce, and I spent four months at the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Studies at St. John's University and St. John's (Benedictine) Abbey in Minnesota. This monastery is noted for its hospitality and welcoming spirit. Mark has clearly come to understand what hospitality means, what it means to try to follow Jesus, and is working on how to live in intentional community. We only wish we had known about Mark when we were in Collegeville, Minn. It would have been enriching to actually interact with his community. The bottom line is that this is a most encouraging article, pointing out some of the challenges we as Mennonites have in actually living out the Anabaptist traditions. Thanks to Joanna Shenk for a disturbingly beautiful article.*—Jep Hostetler, Goshen, Ind.*

### Where is exile tradition?

Regarding "Post-Christendom or Neo-Christendom?" (February): I was hoping for some reference to "exile living." Isn't this a more appropriate image for Anabaptist Christians or all Christians? If we hadn't relegated the book of Daniel to children's stories and end-time predictions, we might have seen it as an alternative to the violence-based empire building and ethnic separatism of the Ezra-Nehemian tradition. That tradition led to the Hasmonians and their treaties with the Romans, intermarriage with Cleopatra's relatives and ancestors of Herod.

The second century BC wisdom prophet (editor of the Daniel stories), with experience living in Babylon, also presented an alternative to the revolutionary violence of the Maccabees. He used the stories of Daniel to show that the people of God could live faithfully as exiles without either kind of violence. Where does the exile tradition and image (with their rejection of state and revolutionary violence) stand today with the people of God?*—David Alleman, Harrisonburg, Va.*

# God sightings in Illinois Mennonite Conference

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

My friend Chuck Neufeld is one of the most missional leaders I know. He constantly scans the horizon for evidence of God at work, then joins God in that work. Furthermore, he's good at telling stories about what God is doing, particularly in the Illinois Mennonite Conference, where he serves as conference minister. Because he exemplifies what I hope to accomplish in this column, I've gained Chuck's permission to share two of his stories, just as he shared them with the leaders of Illinois Conference. The first took place at Berhane Wongel Ethiopian church in December 2011:

*I've got to tell you about what I'm claiming as the miraculous leading of the Spirit. Although I had originally planned to preach on a different passage, as Sunday approached I felt strongly directed to John 14:15-31. My sermon title was, "Because I live, you will live."*

*The congregation had not been informed of my text or sermon title ahead of time. After the service, two women came running up to me. With great joy and amazement, one of them shared how she had awakened in the middle of the night and had felt the Holy Spirit direct her to read John 14:15-31. She received that passage as a gift and shared it with the other woman present. Earlier that morning the two of them had claimed the passage as their theme passage for Berhane Wongel. They were totally amazed when they came to church only to hear me preach on their theme passage.*

*We were all amazed at such obvious and profound leading of the Spirit. I guess we shouldn't be that surprised—we were, after all, promised the Advocate, who would "teach and remind" us of all such things. Thanks be to God.*

The second took place in February 2012 while driving to Canada:

*This morning I picked up a man who was hitchhiking with a gas can in his hand. Assuming he was in need of a ride back to his car, I stopped to pick him up. Before he even got in, he confessed, "Sir, this gas can is a trick. It's the only way I can ever get a ride. Forgive me."*

*I just laughed and told him to get in. He asked if I could take him all the way to Fargo. "Sure," I said. "That's not too far to go" (bad pun intended).*

*Turns out it took only a minute or two for him to learn that I was a pastor and a Jesus follower, which then resulted in him sharing how he believed in Christ but also the extent to which he had been living in denial of God's saving grace. After his confession—a long litany of offenses that resulted from much brokenness—he was able to receive God's forgiveness and commit himself to following Christ in steps ordered by the Holy Spirit.*

*Pray a prayer of thanksgiving with me, for today there is yet another forgiven brother, Jerry is his name, who has accepted the unconditional love and forgiveness of our loving Savior.*

*He wept bitterly for the sins he named, but you should have seen his smile when I assured him of God's love and forgiveness. Amazing joy. We ended in a time of prayer. I prayed for him, and he prayed for me—a tender coming together of two brothers who had not known of each other an hour earlier.*

'Sir, this gas can is a trick. It's the only way I can ever get a ride. Forgive me.'—a hitchhiker

*Hmm, here I assumed I was driving up to Manitoba to speak at a retreat, which I was—but might this meeting of Jerry and Chuck have been God's ordered priority? If so, I am honored to have obliged.*

Thanks be to God for the way Chuck shares his God sightings all around the Illinois Conference. And may there be many more.

**Note:** *These and other stories are available through Neufeld's weekly column, "Heart, Soul, Mind & Strength," at http://illinoismennonite.com/page1/index.html*

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# Welcome back!

Everett J. Thomas

It took nearly a decade to lay the groundwork, but Mennonite Health Services Alliance—known now as MHS Alliance—may become the fifth agency of Mennonite Church USA, if delegates to this summer's Phoenix convention approve. For church leaders in the health-care field, this development represents a homecoming.

MHS Alliance is the umbrella organization for acute-care hospitals, developmental disability services and mental health programs. Forty-eight member organizations provide health-care and housing for seniors. Of its 74 organizations, 62 are affiliated with Mennonite Church USA (see page 34). Its corporate offices are in Goshen, Ind.

If approved as the fifth Mennonite Church USA agency, MHS Alliance would join Everence, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Education Agency and MennoMedia.

"If we are to have ministries that have Anabaptist character," says MHS Alliance CEO Rick Stiffney, "we need strong relationships between the Anabaptist community of faith and the ministries."

For church leaders in the health-care field, this development represents a homecoming.

Those strong relationships were deliberately severed in the early 1980s in the former Mennonite Church. Fearful of lawsuits, Mennonite Board of Missions and Mennonite Central Committee, sponsors of some current MHS Alliance members, discontinued their sponsorship.

"It had everything to do with creating a firewall," says Gene Yoder, now the church administrator at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church in Sarasota, Fla. "What triggered it was lawsuits in other denominations."

Yoder served as CEO at Greencroft Retirement Community in Goshen, Ind., from 1974-2004.

"In the early '80s, we were notified that [Mennonite Board of Missions] no longer wanted to be our sponsor," Yoder says, "and [they said] we needed to get community churches to be our sponsors."

Instead, Yoder and several other institutional leaders got together and began dreaming of an organization that could become their sponsor. That was the beginning of what is now MHS Alliance. "It has come full circle," he says.

Lee Snyder, former president of Bluffton (Ohio) University, is also pleased with the emerging affiliation.

"At a time when MHS Alliance organizations are increasingly focused on faith values and strengthening the relationship with the church," Snyder says, "the prospect of becoming an agency of Mennonite Church USA is a happy one."

One such faith value is understanding that a missional church searches for the ways God is at work in the world—what Ervin Stutzman calls "God sightings" (page 55)—and then joining in that work.

There is also a missional edge for health and human service ministries that serve some of the most destitute and hurting people in our world. If each institution's work culture is infused with integrity and unapologetically Christian, then both employees and those served can experience God's healing and hope.

Delegates at the Phoenix convention will have a significant opportunity to ensure these institutions remain aligned with the church—and remain distinctively Anabaptist. I hope they will do so with as much conviction as did the institutional representatives when they voted unanimously on Feb. 14 to have MHS Alliance become an agency of—and accountable to—Mennonite Church USA.—*ejt*

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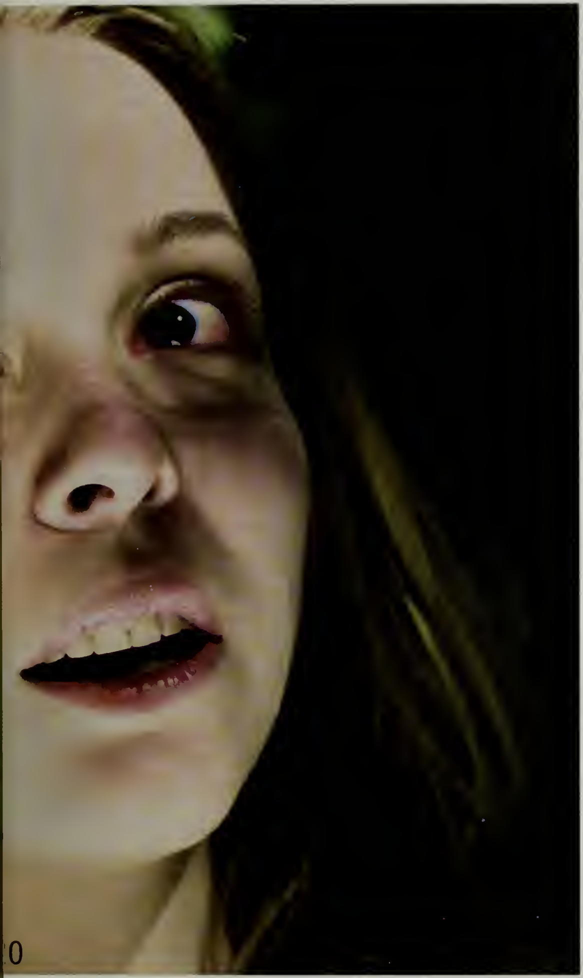

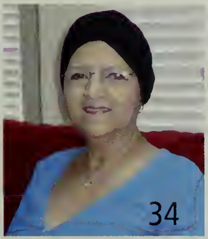

ON THE COVER: Rachel Weaver Kreider prepares for a ride in a helicopter piloted by a member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Photo provided

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### Modeled for Amish novel

Regarding Valerie Weaver-Zercher's "The Amish Makeover of Christian Fiction" (April): Beyond being an editor with Mennonite Women USA, I am also a model and actress in Minneapolis. Last summer, I was hired for a book cover of an Amish romance novel. It was a reshoot of an old cover of Beverly Lewis' book *The Prodigal*.

When I went to the photographer's studio to get my hair and makeup done by an Amish makeup artist expert, I ended up having a wonderful conversation with the crew about Mennonites and Amish and the roots of Anabaptism. This particular photographer shoots many of the book covers for Beverly Lewis, since her books are published by Bethany House Publishers, which is in Minnesota. He takes his work very seriously and has actual Amish clothes made by the Amish. Each head covering is stored alone in its own container.

For this book cover, the best one conveyed the woes of its main character. See it at http://d.gr-assets.com/books/13641822621/236903.jpg. —*Claire DeBerg,* Timbrel *editor*

### Ethiopia did have alphabet

I am much in agreement with John Roth on his observations of the Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia as outlined in the first two paragraphs of his column, "And When They Shall Ask" (April). However, I question his understanding of Ethiopia's long-standing Axumite civilization and his conclusion about the country's written tradition throughout his comments. His assertion that in Ethiopia nothing is fixed in print deserves a response.

Ethiopia is the only country on the continent of Africa that had its own alphabet since A.D. 330 and its calendar since A.D. 212. Sharing the Christian gospel in Ethiopia is a centuries-old practice. Research shows that Ethiopians had heard the Christian gospel long before the followers of Menno Simons were known to the world. In the words of Nathan Hege (1998), "While our barbarian [forebears] were fighting each other and were drinking from the skulls of those they killed, Ethiopians were chanting the Psalms and worshiping the Lord God."

One would assume that there must have been something in writing in order for Ethiopians to chant from the book of Psalms. Roth asked what stories we will tell our children. As for me, I tell my children that Ethiopians actually had a written language in Geez for centuries, enabling them to share the gospel story both in writing as well as orally. I hope we can all find ways to accurately share the story of Ethiopian history.—*Zenebe Abebe, Indianapolis*

### I am a Christian

Your March issue was full of commendatory articles, but there's not enough space to comment on all. Justin King's "I am a Christian" was evidence of a brave revelation of his strong sense of what it is to be a Christian. I concur heartily with what he is expressing. I sent a copy of this issue to my friend, a college professor in a southern university who is struggling to be a Christian among his "far right" colleagues.—*John Bergey, Hesston, Kan.*

### Subtitle is troublesome

Here at Eastern Mennonite Missions, our communications team is again disappointed about the choice of subtitle for our recent news release printed in the April issue of *The Mennonite*: "Dows tried to cap their household at 25 children, slept with eight infants."

I do not deny that the phrase "slept with eight infants" exists in the text of our news release. But in a day when child abuse is frequently in the news, the choice of this phrase as a subtitle borders on sensationalism. If I had known that this phrase would be highlighted in this way I would have pulled it from the text before releasing.

We work very hard to keep our releases focused on the positive and potential rather than over-emphasizing or sensationalizing the negative. Please help us in this regard.—*Joe Hollinger, advancement director, Eastern Mennonite Missions*

**Decision was agonizing**

The April issue was truly an extra "Resurrected Joy" for us this Easter. Both the news report of MHS Alliance's unanimous decision seeking to become a program agency of Mennonite Church USA and the "Welcome Back!" editorial were well-written and positive. And I chuckled at Gene Yoder's blunt yet realistic reflection that "a firewall" was needed 30 years ago. But I also know the many hours that Mennonite Board of Missions—both staff and board—spent agonizing through that "spinoff" process. It was painful in many ways. Yet the mission board had neither the time nor expertise to continue dealing with governance issues for a variety of institutions scattered from east to west. So I join the prayer that Phoenix will indeed be a healing celebration for all who have been involved.—*James Metzler, Remlap, Ala.*

**Support for Van Steenwyk**

Thank you for Joanna Shenk's interview of Mark Van Steenwyk entitled "A Mennonite Anarchist" (February). We, the members of the Outreach and Service Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference, have worked with and gotten to know Mark over the past few years. Through prayers and finances, the Central Plains Mennonite Conference has supported Mark's work as he interacts with Mennonites and other groups throughout the United States, seeking to be followers of Jesus.

We hope the readers of *The Mennonite* will understand that Christian anarchists try to take direct action to support the poor and feed the hungry instead of merely waiting or relying on others to address this never-ending need. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "[if you] share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, ... then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."

We applaud and encourage Mark Van Steenwyk and the members of The Mennonite Worker community in Minneapolis as they fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah by living the life that Jesus calls us to live.—*Roger Farmer, Dennis Lehmann, Fernando Ramos, Rachelle Luitjens, Gebremichael Heramo, Don Kempf, Katie Spohn, Holly Blosser Yoder and David Boshart*

I am responding to Jeff Linthicum (March) and his admonition that there are "no Mennonite anarchists." I would never question brother Linthicum as to his "evangelical Mennonite" belief system. He calls himself a Mennonite, and I take him at his word. Maybe we should do the same with brother Mark Van Steenwyk, who was the subject of "A Mennonite Anarchist" (February).

I found the argument put forward by Van Steenwyk compelling and in need of being expanded in our Radical Reformation circle of ideas. We do not need to stand around with our arms folded guarding the gate in fear that a new idea might destroy our total belief system. We could call Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, Hans Denck, Felix Mantz, Michael Sattler and

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Rachel Weaver Kreider will turn 104 on May 28. Hers is a remarkable life, and we are grateful for the profile of this centenarian written by Dorothy Yoder Nyce (page 12).

We are also grateful for the work Rachel Halder (page 20) is doing to raise awareness of sexualized violence in the church.

"Sexualized violence affects everyone and is a widespread issue in the United States," Halder writes. "Yet ... the majority in the Mennonite church seems uninterested in discussing the topic. There are many reasons why."

In "Jesus' 'Feminine' Wisdom" (page 28), Bert Newton offers a fresh look at Jesus in John's Gospel and says Jesus' teachings "often inverted the male honor code of his day."

As we approach the Phoenix convention in July, we also increase the number of articles related to this convention and one of the primary issues focused by the location: U.S. immigration policy. Marco Saavedra, an undocumented poet and painter, writes "An Undocumented on Justification," the third article in our series of convention-related articles (page 24). In Leadership, archivist John D. Thiesen asks, "What Does an Immigrant Look Like?" (page 30), and Executive Board staff member Hillary J. Scarsella describes the Mennonite churches in the Phoenix area, including how they care for their undocumented neighbors (page 33). In another convention matter, Gordon Houser reports on two Executive Board resolutions coming to delegates (page 32).

Finally, a midwinter debate about "The Naked Anabaptist" brings Alan Kreider and Stuart Murray (page 16) with a response to Ron Adams and Isaac Villegas, who asked in a February article, "Post-Christendom or Neo-Christendom?"—*Editor*

## European Mennonites plan multimedia project

AMSTERDAM, the Netherlands—"A contribution to the public debate" is what Fernando Enns, professor of Mennonite Peace Theology and Ethics at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, calls euMENNet. This multimedia project aims to reveal the influence of five centuries of Mennonite migration and to sharpen the Mennonite identity in Europe for the future.

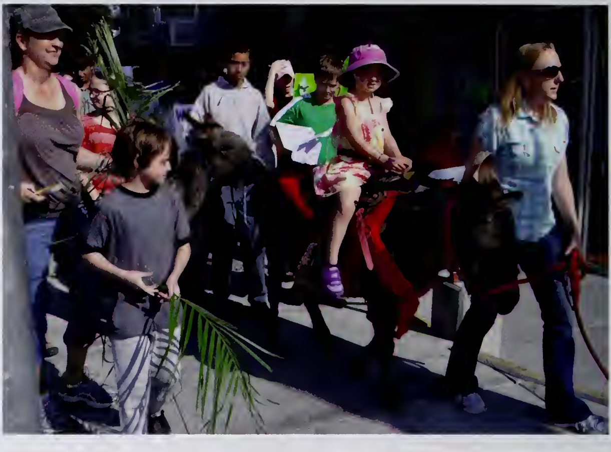
For centuries, Anabaptists moved away, lingered and moved on. The Anabaptist diaspora led Mennonites to Ukraine, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and elsewhere. The purpose of euMENNet is get to know our Mennonites throughout Europe. It should be ready for use in the summer of 2014.—*Mennonite World Conference*

## Lecturer emphasizes understanding spiritual identity for social action

ELKHART, Ind.—The stories a congregation or denomination tells about itself—even when they are not factual—shape its identity, church historian Quinton Dixie demonstrated March 27-28 in the annual Theological Lectureship at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart.

Dixie reflected on how individuals, congregations and denominations establish their identities through their stories and the rules they establish. He then challenged people to strive for a clearer understanding of one's own spiritual identity when working in areas of reconciliation and social action.

Dixie enumerated steps for effective social action that can re-energize and reinvigorate social movements with Christian emphasis. He drew on the writings of Howard Thurman, a theologian and educator instrumental in shaping the vision of nonviolence in the U.S. civil rights movement.—*AMBS*



Tim Nafziger

### Marching for peace on Palm Sunday

March 24 was the 11th annual Pasadena (Calif.) Palm Sunday Peace Parade, a tradition started in the days after the invasion of Iraq. It has been replicated in Harrisonburg, Va., Elkhart, Ind., and Toledo, Ohio. More than 100 people joined the march. —*Tim Nafziger*

## Bethel works to expand connections with China

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—Jim and Shirley Goering of North Newton have spent a dozen summers in China teaching English. In January 2012, they took their 23rd group to China—Bethel College students along with President Perry and Dalene White and Allison McFarland, professor of business. They'll soon lead their 24th trip.

Bethel's three-year-old China initiative, for which the Goerings are major donors, has resulted in Lijun Zhu being in her second year teaching a Mandarin Chinese language class at Bethel.

There are new efforts underway to recruit more Chinese students to Bethel. Thanks to the Goerings' financial support, Lijun has begun working with Bethel admissions to make connections with Chinese students at Mennonite high schools.

Over spring break, she visited with and made presentations to students at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite High School, Christopher Dock Mennonite High School in Lansdale, Pa., and Freeman (S.D.) Academy.

Lijun will also act as a mentor and support person for any Chinese students who do choose to come to Bethel.—*Bethel College*

## Documentary made on Apostle Paul's journeys

GOSHEN, Ind.—A documentary filmed and produced by Goshen College students that takes viewers through the journeys of the Apostle Paul as he broke down barriers to share the gospel of Jesus Christ has been completed.

The film, "Breaking Down Barriers: The Journeys of Apostle Paul," is an effort of FiveCore Media, a video production company of the college's Communication Department that employs communication faculty and students.

In May 2012, Seth Conley, assistant professor of communication, and Kyle Hufford, general manager of FiveCore Media, led a team of nine students through Greece and Rome for three weeks to collect footage exploring how Paul ministered to the Jews, nonbelievers and early churches. Since the filming, six additional students have worked on editing the documentary alongside producers Conley and Hufford.

The film follows Bob Yoder, Goshen College campus pastor, and David Sparks, director of Footstep Ministries, as they guide viewers through cities such as Philippi, Corinth, Rome, Athens and Thessaloniki. Yoder and Sparks explore how Paul overcame religious, cultural and physical obstacles as a leader of the first generation of Christians.—*Goshen College*

Kevin Driedger

## Enbridge pipeline provokes prayers of lament, hope

David Wenger, co-director of the Hermitage retreat center (an affiliate of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference) in Three Rivers, Mich., leads in a lament March 30 for the land about to be disrupted by the installation of the Enbridge pipeline. More than 50 people attended the service to offer confessions and lament for the ongoing dependence of oil requiring a pipeline and to offer prayers of hope for more sustainable living.—*June Mears Driedger*

## A vision and a gift

HESSTON, Kan.—A love for plants and an eye for the Kansas prairie's beauty were the spark and vision for a treasured Hesston landmark that is left as Evie Dyck's ongoing legacy with the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains. Dyck died April 7 at the age of 88.

The Dyck Arboretum was a wheat field on the edge of town when Dyck and her husband, Harold, who died in 2007, donated its 31 acres to Hesston College in 1981. The Dycks wanted to create a place in Hesston where people of all ages could enjoy nature, find a peaceful place for reflection and encourage a greater understanding and appreciation of the prairie.

"Few communities the size of Hesston have a public garden," says arboretum director Scott Vogt. "Evie had a love and appreciation for the Kansas landscape."

Thousands of people visit the arboretum each year for educational events, entertainment or simple enjoyment of nature. Its location next to Schowalter Villa and a block south of the college makes it a convenient place to unify people across the age spectrum.—*Hesston College*

Melissa Hess for MCC

## Prayers for Colombia

Jainober and his daughter Karen Dayana (last names withheld due to concerns for safety) stand in the house where they were living in Bogotá after being displaced from their home in central Colombia in this 2006 photo. Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office and other faith groups designated April 28-29 Days of Prayer and Action for U.S. congregations to stand in solidarity with brothers and sisters in Colombia.—*MCC*

## Israeli soldiers arrest boy

AL-KHALIL (HEBRON), West Bank—On the night of April 14, Israeli soldiers in Hebron took a 13-year-old boy from his house, blindfolded and handcuffed him and closed him inside a nearby checkpoint container for 20 minutes.

The soldiers then walked him, still blindfolded and handcuffed, to another checkpoint a block away and shut him into that checkpoint box. After about 15 minutes, they walked him to an Israeli Army Base. International volunteers who tried to follow were stopped by soldiers who called them "Nazi pigs." Several adult armed settlers were also present and were aggressive and threatening.

After another 15 minutes, soldiers put the boy in a military jeep, drove him to Checkpoint 56 and released him to Palestinian officials on the other side.—*Christian Peacemaker Teams*

# A mother's love

**Cyneatha Millsaps** is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

I have only a few fond memories of my mother during my childhood. Circumstances of life simply made it hard to celebrate the good memories because they were clouded by so many bad memories. But I cling to the memory of my mother caring for us when we were sick. I recall the vast love, compassion and sacrifice she displayed anytime we were under the weather.

I remember having a really bad cold or flu when I was 5 or 6 years old. She rubbed Vicks vapor rub on my chest to help me breathe, made me homemade chicken noodle soup and helped me sip the broth from my bowl. She sat by me in the bathroom and rubbed my back with a cold washrag while all the virus worked itself out of my body. But most of all, I remember her sitting up all night, holding me in her arms, close to her body in order to help break the fever and elevate my back so I could breathe easier.

This was not a once-in-a-while or special situation my mother displayed. She did this for each of her children every time we felt ill. She was attentive to our needs and concerned about our well-being, even at the expense of her own. I remember when I became a young mother, I tried to mimic my mother's behavior with my sons—not sure if I got it completely right—but I was thankful for her example.

> Mary, like all mothers, is saddled with reality of motherhood, late-night feedings, numerous diaper changes, academic and moral teachings and, most of all, safety.

**One of the most important figures** in the Christian story is Mary, the mother of Jesus. From the beginning of Mary entering the story we see extraordinary gifts of a very young lady.

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). And we see it in her song of praise in Luke 1:46-55.

Throughout the story, we see this mother with the ultimate task of caring for the Savior of the world. Mary, like all mothers, is saddled with the reality of motherhood, late-night feedings, numerous diaper changes, academic and moral teachings and, most of all, safety. As her son grew, she, like other mothers, occasionally lost him (Luke 2:41-46), was shocked by his growth and wisdom (Luke 2:48-49), experienced his complete love and concern for her well-being (John 19:25b-27) and encouraged him to be exactly what he was called to be (John 2:1-5). Most of all, she stood by his side when he was falsely accused, tortured and killed (John 19:30).

Mary, like my mother (and so many others), did not leave her child when the most difficult reality of life came their way. Mary followed her son every step as he carried his cross (and ours) to Calvary. She stood with him and prayed as they nailed him to the cross and pierced his side. She was there when he took his last breath. A mother's love knows no boundaries, no limits to what she will do with or for her children. Mary is the prototype of motherhood for all mothers to aspire to.

**This month as we celebrate the exceptional women in our lives**, let us remember the signs of character, love, compassion and sacrifice. Let us seek to be mothers whose love for others (especially our children) is a shining example of God's love toward us. Let us remember not to take ourselves so seriously—like Mary we will make mistakes, turning our heads for just a minute and realizing our child has wandered off, underestimating our children's gifts only to be reminded by them what God created them to be.

Like Mary, let's remember to encourage and call those gifts out of our children when they fail to trust in themselves. But most of all, let's remember to stand with our children when the most challenging times of life come their way, knowing that we serve a God who has that same love, compassion and sacrifice for us.

We are not alone in this most terrifying and blessed experience of motherhood. God has specifically chosen us to assume this task biologically or through adoption, and he is with us every step of the way. May the grace and love of God be with every woman who expresses a mother's love to children in some capacity in their life.

# Mennonites and the Catholic Church

On March 19, the newly elected Pope Francis celebrated his inaugural Mass at St. Peter's Square with some 150,000 people in attendance. Among those gathered for the occasion were two Mennonites—Henk Stenvers of the Netherlands and Rainer Burkart of Germany—who were present on behalf of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in response to an invitation from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The next day, Stenvers and Burkart attended a service at the Vatican in which Pope Francis formally welcomed international and ecumenical guests. In their brief conversation with the pope, Stenvers said they expressed gratitude for the inclusion of "small churches" in dialogues promoted by the Catholic Church and, he continued, "we assured him of our prayers."

From one perspective, the brief encounter of Mennonites and the pope was a relatively small matter—a ceremonial formality overshadowed by the presence of more famous and powerful guests and by the fact that Catholics outnumber Mennonites in the world by approximately 1,000 to 1. Still, the fact that Mennonites were present at the event—coupled with our participation in recent dialogues and evidence of growing Mennonite-Catholic interaction at the grassroots level—suggests that Mennonite relations with the Catholic Church have been undergoing a tectonic shift.

**In the centuries following** the tumultuous divisions of the 16th century, Mennonite attitudes toward the Catholic Church and its hierarchy were suspicious at best. As with most groups born out of conflict, the heirs of the Anabaptist tradition have tended to define themselves in negative terms over against the groups they left behind. Mennonites, we have said, are "neither Catholic nor Protestant." We do not baptize babies, worship saints, believe the bread and wine of Communion become the literal body and blood of Christ or are willing to use violence to defend our faith. At the root of this identity of opposition were the memories of Anabaptist martyrs whose suffering at the hands of Catholic authorities reinforced a sense of Catholic "otherness." In some parts of Latin America, especially Colombia and Argentina, this wariness toward the Catholic Church was bolstered in the 20th century by ongoing stories of harassment and even persecution of Mennonites and other Protestant minorities. Indeed, it is still common in Spanish-speaking settings to refer casually to "Christians" and "Catholics," suggesting the two do not overlap.

Yet there are also many signs that this identity of opposition is changing. Already in the 1980s, historians of Anabaptism began to note how much the radical reformers were shaped by the writings of Thomas à Kempis, currents of Catholic lay piety and the influence of certain Catholic mystics. Though Amish groups may find the comparison surprising, one can also trace significant lines of continuity between Catholic monastic orders and the disciplined, communal, nonconforming, pacifist, hierarchically structured way of life—sealed by a solemn vow of commitment to Christ—that characterizes the Amish today. In 2003, Mennonites and Catholics concluded a sustained conversation on their shared commitment to peace with a joint statement, "Called Together to be Peacemakers." And more recently, MWC has joined in a trilateral conversation with Catholics and Lutherans to discuss our differing understandings of baptism. Signs of an ecumenical thawing were dramatically symbolized closer to home by the recent creation of the "Michael Sattler" house adjacent to St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., as a center of hospitality and a "permanent bridge" between the Mennonite and Catholic communities.

**So what does all this mean** for the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church? First, it is significant that Pope Francis—like César García, general secretary of MWC—comes from the Global South, home to 60 percent of the world's Catholics and two-thirds of all Mennonites. Even more important, in his inaugural Mass, Francis made clear that he wants his pontificate to be characterized by humility and focused on the poor. The role of the pope, he said, is to speak especially on behalf of "the weakest, the least important, ... the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison"—surely a message that Mennonites all around the world can embrace.

Differences between Mennonites and Catholics persist, but the time has come for Mennonites to move beyond an identity of opposition to celebrate our shared commitments and proclaim with our Catholic brothers and sisters the good news of Christ's healing and hope. "Today amid so much darkness," the pope concluded in his homily, "we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others." Amen. TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Mennonite relations with the Catholic Church have been undergoing a tectonic shift.

# Digital natives keep getting younger

In 2001, education and technology writer Marc Prensky popularized the term *digital natives* to describe the first generations of children growing up fluent in the language of computers, video games and other technologies. (The rest of us are *digital immigrants*, struggling to understand.)

In her article "The Touch-Screen Generation" in *The Atlantic* (April), Hanna Rosin writes about how young children—even toddlers—are spending more and more time with digital technology. She asks, "Should parents recoil or rejoice?"

In 1999, Rosin writes, the American Academy of Pediatrics discouraged television viewing for children younger than 2, "citing research on brain development that showed this age group's critical need for 'direct interactions with parents and other significant caregivers.'" In 2006, 90 percent of parents said their children younger than 2 consumed some form of electronic media. Yet in its updated policy in 2011, the AAP "largely took the same approach it took in 1999, uniformly discouraging passive media use, on any type of screen, for these kids," writes Rosin.

**What are parents to do?** Well, Rosin is one, with three children "who are all fans of the touch screen." But when she talks with people (also parents of young children) who help develop interactive media for children, she finds them more restrictive than she is about their children using technology.

Rosin describes "the neurosis of our age: as technology becomes ubiquitous in our lives, American parents are becoming more, not less, wary of what it might be doing to their children." Parents are afraid that if they don't use the new technology just right, "their child could end up one of those sad, pale creatures who can't make eye contact and has an avatar for a girlfriend."

Rosin asks, How do small children actually experience electronic media, and what does that experience do to their development?

Because much of the recent technology is new, most of the research in this area concerns toddlers' interaction with television. Researchers eventually identified certain rules that promote engagement: "stories have to be linear and easy to follow, cuts and time lapses have to be used very sparingly, and language has to be pared down and repeated."

Now researchers are beginning to study toddlers' use of iPads to see what they can learn and if they can transfer what they learn to the real world. They ask further, "What effect does interactivity have on learning? What role do familiar characters play in children's learning from iPads?"

**Rosin wondered if too many apps** developed for children emphasized education over play. Then she came across apps designed by a Swedish game studio named Toca Boca.

In 2011, the studio's founders, Emil Ovemar and Björn Jeffery, launched Toca Tea Party. "The game is not all that different from a real tea party," writes Rosin. It's not overtly educational, and there's no winning and no reward. "The game is either very boring or terrifically exciting, depending on what you make of it," she writes. For kids, the game is fun every time, "because it's dependent entirely on imagination."

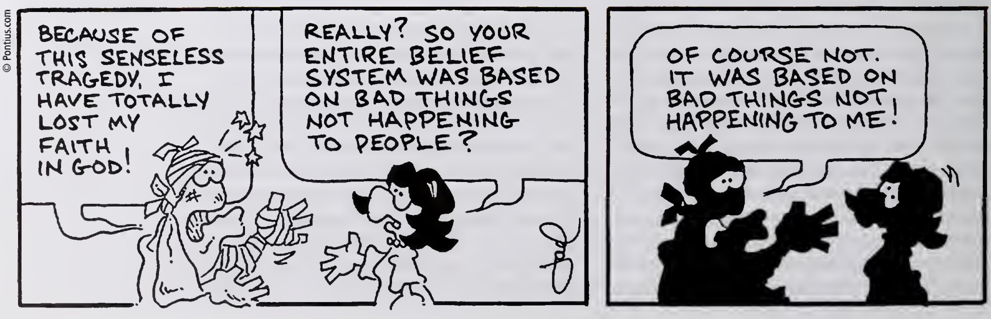
Rosin notes that "every new medium has, within a short time of its introduction, been condemned as a threat to young people." However, despite "legitimate broader questions about how American children spend their time," parents have to decide for themselves.

Rosin decided to let her young son have access to an iPad for six months. "After about 10 days, the iPad fell out of his rotation, just like every toy does." It was just one more tool.

We digital immigrants will continue to struggle with our digital natives.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


© Pontius.com
BECAUSE OF THIS SENSELESS TRAGEDY, I HAVE TOTALLY LOST MY FAITH IN GOD!
REALLY? SO YOUR ENTIRE BELIEF SYSTEM WAS BASED ON BAD THINGS NOT HAPPENING TO PEOPLE?
OF COURSE NOT. IT WAS BASED ON BAD THINGS NOT HAPPENING TO ME!
Joel

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “That we are captivated by issues surrounding something called ‘sexuality’ is an indication of the captivity of the church to money, class and liberal political arrangements.” —Stanley Hauerwas in “Living Well in Ordinary Time: A Tribute to Rowan Williams”

## New effort by MDs to cut wasteful medical spending

Nine medical societies representing nearly 375,000 physicians are challenging the widely held perception that more health care is better, releasing lists last year of tests and treatments their members should no longer automatically order. The 45 items listed include most repeat colonoscopies within 10 years of a first test, early imaging for most back pain, brain scans for patients who fainted but didn't have seizures, and antibiotics for mild-to-moderate sinus distress. Also on the list: heart imaging stress tests for patients without coronary symptoms. And a sobering recommendation calls for cancer doctors to stop treating tumors in end-stage patients who have not responded to multiple therapies and are ineligible for experimental treatments.

The recommendations are being circulated to consumers and doctors by a coalition calling itself Choosing Wisely (www.choosingwisely.org), which includes employer groups, unions, AARP and Consumer Reports. Neither the insurance industry nor the federal government was involved in the process.—*Associated Press*

**2.9%**
of full-power commercial U.S. TV stations are owned by Latinos.

**0.7%**
are owned by blacks of any nationality.

**2.9%**
are owned by Asians/Asian-Americans.
—*Columbia Journalism Review*

## Temperatures highest in 4,000 years

Global temperatures are warmer than at any time in at least 4,000 years, scientists reported March 7. Over the coming decades they are likely to surpass levels not seen on the planet since before the last ice age. Previous research had extended back roughly 1,500 years and suggested that the rapid temperature spike of the past century, believed to be a consequence of human activity, exceeded any warming episode during those years. The new work confirms that result while suggesting the modern warming is unique over a longer period.—*New York Times*

## Waste not

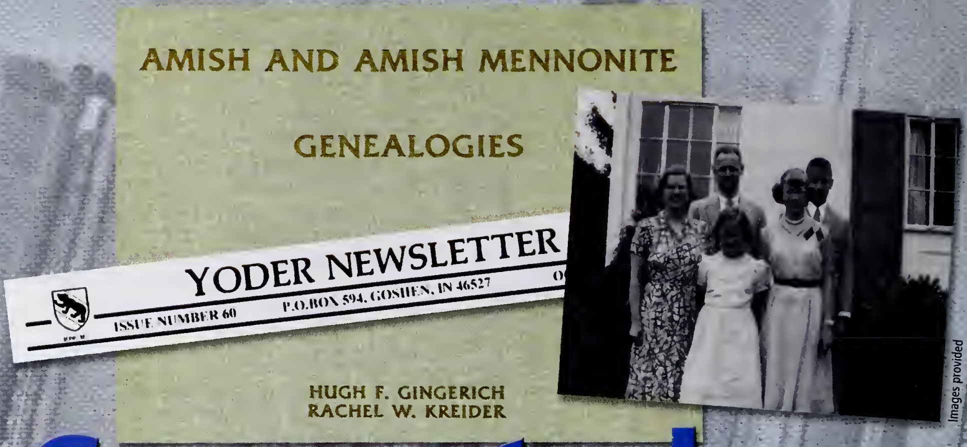
About half the food produced in the world is wasted, according to a study by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, based in the United Kingdom. This waste is the consequence of unnecessarily strict expiration dates, Western consumer demand for cosmetically perfect food, poor agricultural practices, inadequate infrastructure and poor storage facilities. Up to half the food purchased in Europe and the United States is thrown away. Wasted food also wastes resources used to produce it, including water.—*Christian Century*

## Tongue in cheek

**Not in My Backyard Sunday, Nov. 13:** Bulletin inserts will make it clear that life-changing mission work only takes place overseas, where the people are really grateful. Church members who have taken trips abroad will wear ponchos and speak on how they received even more than they gave. Youth will feel a call to ministry, which should dissipate by the fourth hymn. Local poverty within driving distance of the church, gun control legislation and union organizing drives need not be mentioned.—*huffingtonpost.com/lillian-daniel/the-church-calendar-new-a_b_2600258.html*

## The costs of health care

- Sean Recchi was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma at age 42. Total cost, in advance, for his treatment plan and initial doses of chemotherapy: **$83,900**. Charges for blood and lab tests amounted to **more than $15,000**; with Medicare, they would have cost **a few hundred dollars**.
- Charge for each of four boxes of sterile gauze pads, as itemized in a $348,000 bill following a patient's diagnosis of lung cancer: **$77**
- Patient was charged **$18 each** for Accu-Chek Diabetes Test Strips. Amazon sells boxes of 50 for about $27, or **55¢ each**.
- Emilia Gilbert slipped and fell in June 2008 and was taken to the emergency room. She is still paying of the $9,418 bill from that hospital visit in weekly installments. Her three CT scans cost **$6,538**. Medicare would have paid about **$825** for all three.
- Patient was charged **$333** for a chest X-ray. The national rate paid by Medicare is **$23.83**.
- Patient was charged **$24** per 500-mg tablet of Niacin. In drugstores, the pills go for about **a nickel each**.
- The charge for one 325-mg tablet of Acetaminophen, the first of 344 lines in an eight-page hospital bill: **$1.50**. You can buy **100 tablets on Amazon for $1.49**.
- The hospital charge for standard saline solution: **$84**. Online, a liter bag costs **$5.16**.—*from "Bitter Pill: How Outrageous Pricing and Egregious Profits Are Destroying Our Health Care" by Steven Brill in* Time, *March 4*



AMISH AND AMISH MENNONITE

GENEALOGIES

HUGH F. GINGERICH
RACHEL W. KREIDER

YODER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 60 P.O.BOX 594, GOSHEN, IN 46527

Images provided

# Connected centenarian

## A profile of Rachel Weaver Kreider

by Dorothy Yoder Nyce

Connections affect outlook. How people network varies during life's decades. For Rachel Weaver Kreider, both ancestry and current experience prompt stories to retell. As a child, Rachel heard her Grandma Weaver talk of her Yoder grandmothers, who in turn knew more grandmas. Stunned, Rachel pondered those grandmas.

**Rachel's connections grew.** Her grandma talked intensely of her astute Uncle Reuben Yoder, who no longer lived. Young Rachel watched her grandma page through the big Hochstetler book of 1912 for links, read letters from Aunt Vinora's early 1920s work with Mennonite Central Committee in Constantinople among Russian immigrants, and pondered Uncle John's questions about cousin marriage.

Rachel loved the family lore. When called for an errand by her mother (Laura Johns Weaver), Rachel told her grandma, "Don't say anything until I return."

Perhaps conservative in appearance, Rachel's family exposed her to ordinary and liberal ideas. For some years her father, Samuel E. Weaver, combined farming with duties as Shipshewana, Ind., school superintendent and Forks Mennonite Church ministry. He read *Christian Century* writers; she listened with him to Sunday afternoon broadcasts by Harry Emerson Fosdick. Her mother, orphaned at 11 and with an eighth-grade education, read magazines; she absorbed *Ladies Home Journal* content cover-to-cover for 25 years.

Born May 28, 1909, Rachel describes herself as ordinary. She represents many women with tasks to do, hobbies and siblings—for her, two brothers and a sister. While distinct from women, she echoes their being socialized to be undervalued. "We let others lead" she says.

Now nearing 104, Rachel Weaver Kreider might ponder a grandson's computer yen or review a listing of book titles she recently read before turning to proofread a recent issue of the *Yoder Newsletter* (YNL). But those details rush the story.

Alongside relatives, Rachel inwardly nurtured and questioned Mennonite roots. Her maturing religious links knew conviction and pain. She noticed when her mother could not receive Communion emblems because she had refused "proper" strings for her bonnet. She doubted when her father resigned, outwardly due to health but also because he was educated beyond that expected for "men of the (minister's) bench." In 1920, the family moved from Sam's well-managed farm to near Goshen, Ind. New connections followed, with friends whose church loyalties were broader than Mennonite.

That adjustments took time reflects self-understanding. Regarding church life, Rachel was baptized at College Mennonite Church (meeting on the Goshen College campus). Then in 1922, her family and a dozen others shifted without valid letters to "that other" (General Conference Mennonite) church on Eighth Street. A year later, nearly 100 people changed membership due to turmoil that closed Goshen College for a year (1923-24). Rachel later wrote about that surge of activity in a 480-page book, *The History of the Eighth Street Mennonite Church (1913-1987)*. "Ordinary" Rachel knew the poignant, emotional power of transition. Honored oldest member, she now celebrates Eighth Street's centennial year.

**Rachel enjoyed Goshen High School** years, spurred by a woman Latin teacher who described her as "a bud opening." Rachel excelled in writing via memories: 20 snowbound travelers housed in the Weaver home overnight became a story. A cousin's week-long visit from Chicago had prompted Rachel's writing a novel about a boy resistant to admitting the strengths of rural life.

> She noticed when her mother could not receive Communion emblems because she had refused 'proper' strings for her bonnet.

On receiving the "best all-around senior girl award" (1927), she felt her parents' lack of praise. To them, being humble and ordinary mattered. A repeated observation of her mother's lingers: "For how smart you are, I never cease to be surprised by how dumb you can be at times."

Reserve marked Rachel's Goshen College years. She describes Old Mennonite students (*the* Mennonites) as straight-laced or super good. General Conference Mennonites were judged "not good enough" for leadership with the religious "Y." A day student, Rachel liked Verna Graber Smith's teaching about Roman life, Edward M. Yoder's Latin teaching and Gustav Enns' German class. But Enns' horror of "modernism" provoked her. One of two from her class of 31 to find a job directly after being graduated, she broadened connections while teaching English and Latin at Roann, about 50 miles away, for two years prior to marriage.

Leonard Kreider, a Goshen College classmate of 1931, asked if she was "willing to be as poor as he." When he also proposed that they "go for further education together," she felt relief from the typical burden of putting husband through school. "I trusted my fulfillment to emerge." Rachel married Leonard, son of Lloyd and Adelia (Stover) of Wadsworth, Ohio, at her home on June 20, 1933. ▶

Rachel feeds son Emil in their North Newton, Kan., home.
Photo provided

Living in an attic while students at Ohio State University (OSU in Columbus, she for a master's degree in philosophy and he for a doctorate in chemistry), they knew economic restraints during the Depression years. Together they lived on 65 cents per day for food. Connections broadened—with Jews, atheists, secular professors and communists. Not dogmatic in view, with candor they heard new perspectives.

Rachel through letters asked Ohio Mennonite pastors to support the fellows facing ROTC.

**"Ordinary" Rachel's Mennonite convictions** also surfaced. Her seven-page letter of Sept. 28, 1935, to former Goshen College professor Guy F. Hershberger details her involvement on the OSU campus with students protesting the rule that, except for physical reasons, fellows were required to take Reserve Officers Training Corp or be expelled. (See James Juhnke, *Mennonite Life*, December 2002.) One of 25 Mennonites and part of a "United Front" cluster of campus organizations, she spoke directly to OSU President Rightmire: "If our boys are true to their 400-year history to not bear arms, being so barred from a state institution is unjust discrimination against law-abiding, tax-paying people like Ohio Mennonites." Rachel also expressed conscience with philosophy professors and through letters asked Ohio Mennonite pastors to support the fellows facing ROTC.

The Kreiders also broadened insights while in New York City during 1937. Leonard published seven research articles at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and Rachel pursued housekeeping with self-awareness. "I just had to write something." Her attempt with fiction—a serialized story about her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother—never materialized. But Uncle John's box of Yoder genealogy materials, left with Rachel before he died, rarely lay dormant.

Leonard agreed to teach chemistry several years at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., that evolved into 12. North Newton proved to be a good town in which to raise Kreider children born in 1938, 1940 and 1943. Daughter Anna, from age 12 on, documented her life. *Speaking for Herself: The Autobiographical Writings of Anna K. Juhnke* describes Rachel's mothering experience: "… 21 songs that Mom used to sing to us. … Mom told us stories—as from 1-2 Kings—while she ironed. … Mom began to untangle Amish Yoders. … pies were Mom's specialty. … Mom and I had a good relationship, intimate conversation. … Mom taught me organizing skills—how to lead meetings, keep records. … Mom was my first model for women in church leadership. She 'pastored' every Sunday—greeting people, integrating them into action, inquiring into their grief or joys."

**"Ordinary" Rachel soaked up opportunities** while in North Newton; writing continued. Her printed booklet "Key in Your Hand" nudged young women to be peace advocates alongside young men engaged in alternate service during World War II. She joined Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, founded by Jane Addams, a social activist among Chicago immigrants. Mennonite WILPF women, alert to denominational experience as immigrants in 1874 and 1920, wrote letters opposing war.

From Kansas, the Kreider family moved to Wadsworth, Ohio, for Leonard's employment as researcher with natural rubber at B. F. Goodrich in Akron. With family her first priority, Rachel nevertheless broadened connections. She started a local branch of Church Women United, in part to meet women of diverse denominations. She served as secretary with her church's mission committee for nine years and prodded congregations to keep records for the Central District Conference historical committee. Asked to write the 100-year history of First Mennonite Church of Wadsworth, she studied the Old Mennonite story in order to write the General Conference one. Together with several couples, the Kreiders started a peace project later used as a model by American Friends Service Committee.

"I was learning all the time," ordinary Rachel says. She researched and wrote a genealogy of

Leonard's parents. With genealogist Ford Coolman she wrote *The Mennonite Cemeteries (3) of Medina County with a Brief Historical Sketch of the Churches* (1952). After searching through peace plays, she wrote "Overcoming Evil" (1957), a play about the Hochstetler massacre by Indians in 1757; her play lives on at Hochstetler reunions.

Leonard's professional experience and Rachel's yen for history influenced their children's academic pursuits. Emil (married to Louise Pankratz), Anna (to James Juhnke) and Sara (to Gregory Hartzler) earned doctoral degrees before teaching, respectively, at Beloit College in Wisconsin, Bethel College and Goshen College. Growth and interests of eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren inspire Rachel.

**Rachel's life, made rich** through anecdotes and connections, also knew poignant, sacred loss. During the fall of 1982, both adult daughters were diagnosed with cancer. Sara's aggressive type allowed only several months before her death. Leonard and Rachel were grateful to have moved to Goshen, where they helped care for three grandchildren. Anna lived 23 more years. Her recital of a journey of active involvement with treatment of kidney cancer exudes faith—faith that marks generations. Leonard died in 2001. Profound insight accompanied Rachel's grief—into her mother's coping as an orphan, her parent's economic and church trials, and her deepened claim of "The Anabaptist Vision." "I could do no less" she says.

Rachel W. Kreider's Yoder genealogy hobby became public by 1970. Connecting her Christian Yoder "lines" spurred careful attention to detail. Hugh F. Gingerich of Washington, D.C., visited Rachel in Wadsworth. Learning that she had collected and indexed needed, tedious information from obituaries, census, cemetery and marriage records, along with county historical biographies, he invited her to become co-author of the eventual classic *Amish and Amish Mennonite Genealogies* (1986).

In the book's preface, Gingerich credits Rachel's genealogical strengths: "having worked up preliminary studies of many of the families, kept up with the plethora of newly published books and booklets on Amish genealogy and carried on practically all the extensive correspondence required in the compilation of a volume of genealogies such as this one."

Discovering connections among Amish Yoders, the co-authors paid attention to practices (such as baptism or dress mode), oral tradition, schisms, patterns of migration, and variant spellings. Surname Yoder variants include Joder, Jotter, Yotter, Yothers and Ioder. Another Yoder researcher, Chris Yoder from Michigan, soon asked if Rachel knew of his great-grandfather Reuben Yoder (1831-1912). That Reuben proved to be none other than her own Grandma Weaver's Uncle Rueben. Rachel then invited Chris Yoder to her kitchen table along with Ben Yoder. Together they founded the *Yoder Newsletter* in 1983; Rachel remains senior contributing editor. Published for 30 years, two issues per year, the *YNL* informs hundreds of subscribers of upcoming reunions, St. Joder Day—Aug. 16—activities, Yoder DNA testing results and more. A home page was begun in 1997: www.yodernewsletter.org.

Profound insight accompanied Rachel's grief—into her mother's coping as an orphan, her parent's economic and church trials, and her deepened claim of 'The Anabaptist Vision.'

Feature articles appear in each eight-page *YNL*. Over the decades, Rachel has authored varied titles, such as: "Revelations from Barbara Shirk's Will," "'Strong Jacob' Yoder Stories," "The St. Joder Chapel" (in Switzerland) and "Speculations on Earliest Ties to European Joders." Reflecting historian concerns, another article reports a problem that has dogged Rachel for five decades; another warns of "a garbled mystery of two lines."

Recently, Chris Yoder took nine boxes of Rachel's Yoder materials to his home. While she graciously expects him to pursue the puzzles that have haunted her, she admits a measure of grief, realizing that she can no longer add a newly discovered "tidbit" to her files. Rachel may also inform friends of her other extensive writing or travels (to 65 countries) not mentioned here.

This ordinary, connected centenarian might better be described "extraordinaire" as she instills this truth: "No Future without knowledge of the Past."

*Dorothy Yoder Nyce, Goshen, Ind., is author of* Multifaith Musing: Essays and Exchanges *(2010) and compiler of her mother's* 'Talks' that Teach from Bessie King Yoder 1906-2008 *(2012).*

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**In post-Christendom we will need to learn to live distinctively.**

# A case for post-Christendom

by Alan Kreider and Stuart Murray

In their article "Post Christendom or Neo-Christendom?" (February), Ron Adams and Isaac Villegas take issue with the way we use "post-Christendom" in *The Naked Anabaptist* and other writings. We think "post-Christendom" is a useful clarifying lens that enables us to see Christianity's loss of cohesion and control in multifaith, secular and materialistic American and European societies in which committed Christians are increasingly marginal. They disagree, pointing to Christendom's resilient capacity to change and to Christianity's continuing dominance in the politics and culture of western societies. They call this "neo-Christendom." Does this matter, or are we simply quibbling about terminology?

We agree with Adams and Villegas that terms matter. We agree that neo-Christendom helpfully reminds us that "Christendom" has assumed different forms throughout history and in diverse cultural contexts and that Christendom is not dead. In fact, we could argue that the United States throughout its history has been an example of neo-Christendom. Unlike many European countries in old Christendom, America has not had a state church. The first amendment of the U.S. Constitution prevents that. But Christendom assumptions, values, priorities and expectations have permeated this society. For centuries most Americans have assumed that

- their country is Christian,
- most Americans are Christians,
- America's political leaders are Christian,
- mission is not necessary in America,
- careful baptismal preparation is not necessary,
- the upside-down way of Jesus doesn't apply to their country's life.

These Christendom assumptions are old hat. It is not a sign of a novel neo-Christendom when we discover people who make vigorous Christian noises in the United States, even in Britain and other western societies.

**What is our situation today?** Adams and Villegas claim that we live in "confusing times" that require of us discernment and careful theological reflection, and we agree. Interpreting the present and pondering even the near future is not easy in a time of cultural turbulence and competing analyses. So we welcome Adams' and Villegas' challenge to the way we understand our context and the proposals we make for missional responses to it. Like them, we take seriously the rhetoric of American presidents and British prime ministers. We, too, are interested in Christianity's long half-life in American and European societies. But do these things place us in neo-Christendom?

We think post-Christendom is more helpful in equipping us to face reality. We in America as well as Europe are entering a new world that we and others call post-Christendom. It's not that the Christendom era has suddenly ended or that a fully formed new culture is present or imminent. On the contrary, in our writings we have emphasized that Christendom's vestiges continue. For some years members of the Anabaptist Network in Britain have carefully traced the ongoing influences of Christendom in the United Kingdom. They have found these widespread but retreating. So when Stuart circulated Adams and Villegas' article to network members, they were fascinated and bemused. Of course, they said, the legacy of Christendom remains, but it's a shell.

Adams and Villegas quote Britain's prime minister saying, "We are a Christian society, and we should not be afraid to say so." The UK Anabaptists view this as defensive bluster. The UK they live in varies from place to place, but overall it is a secularized, multicultural, materialist society. A tiny fraction of its people go to church and would view with horror a Christendom-style attempt to coerce uniformity of religion or impose conservative Christian values on society.

Post-Christendom describes a transitional period in western culture, a twilight zone between the slow dying of the Christendom era and the emergence of whatever will replace this.

**In the United States**, these issues are more contested than they are in the UK. Some Americans continue to try to impose Christianity on others, while others vigorously oppose these attempts. But they have less energy than they did a decade ago. Studies indicate that in the 2012 presidential election, to which Adams and Villegas refer, candidates Romney and Obama were far less willing to "boldly speak of their faith on the campaign trail" than the candidates were in 2008. Not only nationally but locally in many parts of the United States as well, post-Christendom reflects realities already present and becoming increasingly prevalent. (For an examination of this, see Appendix I of Alan and Eleanor Kreider's *Worship and Mission After Christendom* [2011], "Are Americans in Christendom?")

Post-Christendom describes a transitional period in western culture, a twilight zone between the slow dying of the Christendom era and the emergence of whatever will replace this. The "confusing times" we live in are at least partly due to this overlap between Christendom and post-Christendom realities. It's not at all surprising that vestiges of Christendom, such as those Adams and Villegas mention, can easily be identified. These will surely continue to litter the post-Christendom landscape for many years. A culture that has flourished for 1,500 years does not suddenly disappear without trace. But we are convinced that Christendom and neo-Christendom are fading and that if Christianity is to have a future ▶

Church attendance is a serious indicator of Christian faith and commitment.

in America, we must grapple with the realities of post-Christendom.

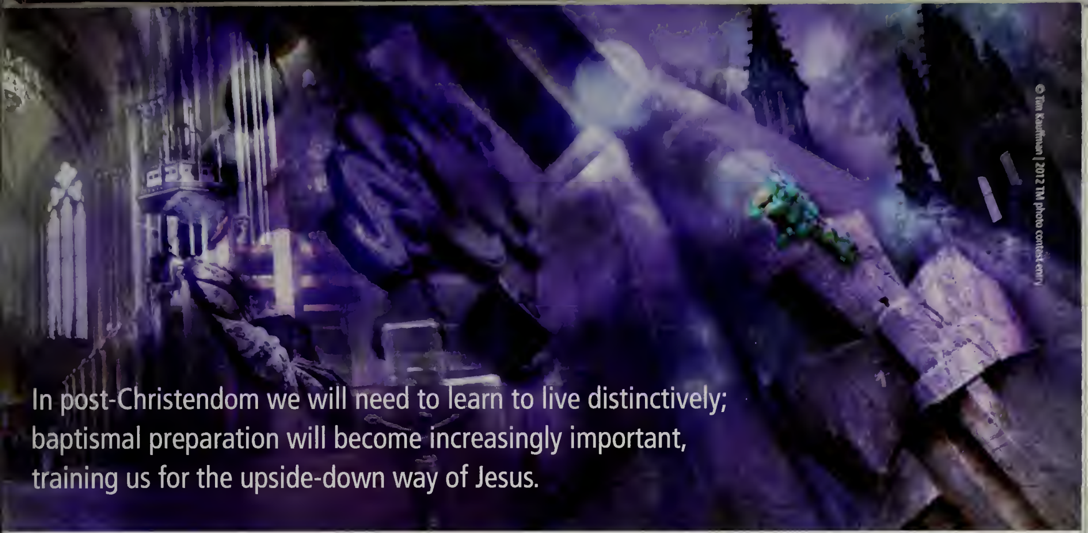
**What are these realities?** What challenges and opportunities do they offer us in our daily experience, on the ground? Perhaps different contexts are responsible for our different perceptions. But in view of what we know of Adams' and Villegas' contexts, we are surprised by their comments. The vestiges of Christendom they point to are national in scale and political in nature. What about the scenes locally in Madison, Wis., or Chapel Hill, N.C.? Certainly there are large, vigorous churches there. But if these cities fit with national trends, there are vastly fewer people who attend worship services today than there were 50 years ago, and the trajectory of Christian practice is downward.

Does church attendance matter? Unlike Adams and Villegas, we think it does. Church attendance is a serious indicator of Christian faith and commitment. Experience in Europe demonstrates that when people stop going to church, they lose track of the Christian story and find it difficult to pass Christian faith and virtues to their children. So in Madison and Chapel Hill, as elsewhere in the United States and in Europe, "Christianity" becomes a general cultural term, bandied about by presidents as it loses the loyalty of the people. Its advocates, struggling to enforce a denatured faith upon an unwilling populace, resort to bluster before retreating. And the secularization of America continues, shown especially in its public universities, the increasing number of Americans without religious conviction (the "nones"), the proliferation of a wide variety of faith communities and the great passions of Americans that are evident not in worship and religiously inspired action but in consumerism, technology and sports.

Both of us have traveled widely in western societies and recognize that some parts of the United States have a greater residue of Christendom than others. There are even some communities that could fit the category of "Mennonitedom." But overwhelmingly, western nations—even the United States—are now in pluralist post-Christendom. Even Topeka, Ind. In this quaint, Amish-influenced, industrializing town where Alan takes his car for servicing, there are two Muslim communities, one of which has a mosque in a strip mall; women in burkhas mingle in the grocery with women in cape dresses; Japanese Buddhists work in a local factory, and a Campus Life group brings Christian witness to unchurched Anglos who live in the trailer court.

This is an interesting, bracing world to live in. We are grateful for some of the contributions of Christendom—in the arts, spirituality and theology. But we do not bewail its passing. Christendom was a brilliant and brutal civilization that made life tough for minorities and misfits, including Jews and Anabaptists. But post-Christendom makes Christians more marginal than they were in the Christendom centuries. Is marginalization necessarily a bad thing? The two of us tend to talk calmly about marginalization, but Adams and Villegas are concerned that this "misleads us into thinking that Christians are now marginalized victims." We disagree. We insist that marginalization does not entail victimization and that the two can be and must be decoupled.

**Christians today cannot count** on the Chris-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In post-Christendom we will need to learn to live distinctively; baptismal preparation will become increasingly important, training us for the upside-down way of Jesus.

tendom Sunday, a day of worship on which the restaurants are closed, the stores shuttered and there are no sports and musical activities for the children. Christians in the UK in the 1990s campaigned vigorously to "keep Sunday special," and they lost. Further, Christians cannot assume that in their towns pastors have prestige and influence on par with other professionals. This is fine. In this post-Christendom world, nonconformist Christians who follow Jesus radically and make upside-down decisions about lifestyle will feel at home.

So we don't see marginalization as problematic. Neither do we think marginalization needs to produce a victim mentality. In post-Christendom societies there is little evidence of systemic religious persecution or victimization. In fact, marginality may be a gift to the Christian community. It frees us from the pretensions of imperial Christianity and gives us space to rediscover faithful discipleship and creative witness. The Scriptures reveal a God who frequently does new things on the margins. So we can accept marginality as a gift that enables us to be attuned to what the Spirit is saying and doing in our time.

We close with a final point of agreement with Adams and Villegas: We should encourage and nurture friendship with members of non-Christian religious communities. This may mean sharing facilities, as they suggest, or developing partnerships around social initiatives or standing with them when they face discrimination. But in many parts of America we will do this as marginalized religious minorities in societies that are experiencing increasing secularization. As these relationships grow, we will need to address the oppressive realities of the Christendom era, but it is the emerging reality of post-Christendom that provides the context in which we speak.

In post-Christendom we will need to learn to live distinctively; baptismal preparation will become increasingly important, training us for the upside-down way of Jesus. Further, we will need to speak about our Christian faith in a way we never did when "everybody was Christian"; God's mission of reconciling all things in Christ will be an ordinary concern of post-Christendom churches. We can do these things only if our faith is embedded in our hearts, expressed in worship and Christian practices, and embodied in our lives. When that is true, we will find that post-Christendom can be a bracing time to be Anabaptist Christians. We and Christians in other traditions will also find resources in the marginalized Anabaptist tradition to help us face the challenges of following Jesus on the margins in post-Christendom.

*Alan Kreider is retired professor of church history and mission at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Stuart Murray is author of* The Naked Anabaptist *(Herald Press, 2010).*

### Uncovering sexualized violence in the Mennonite church

# Our stories untold

by Rachel Halder

Before I clicked the enter button of my public Facebook status, questions plagued my mind: Was I really ready to talk about sex in a public space? Was I prepared to delve into the dirty, murky waters of sexualized violence and abuse against women and men, claiming that these things actually exist in the Mennonite church? Could I handle potential negative vitriol? Did I really want my personal story to be so exposed?

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**Pressing enter on the status**, my answer was yes. There was no going back.

On June 5, 2012, I launched Our Stories Untold, an online platform for provoking conversation and allowing women and men to tell their stories about sexualized violence within the Mennonite church. Immediately my inbox was flooded with other Mennonite survivors' stories. Originally terrified of putting myself out in the open, I (a somewhat anonymous figure behind a computer screen) was honored to receive a plethora of supportive messages and stories of personal abuse.

"Back in the mid-1980s, when I was a student at [a Mennonite] college I was raped."

"I told my mother [of being attacked], and she asked one question and to the best of my knowledge did nothing else. Brushed it off."

"How could I have two very dear Mennonite friends who were abused as Mennonite children, two different Mennonite communities, two different decades, one by her Mennonite father, another by her Mennonite schoolteacher?"

Tears streamed down my cheeks as I opened messages containing stories with these lines and many others. One woman wrote, "I am now beginning to truly understand the trauma and the effect it has had on my whole being. What a difference awareness and understanding can have on the recovery process! There is so much continual damage that can be done if such tragic secrets are kept or if help isn't encouraged or sought because of shame about the issue."

Other women shared how Mennonite colleges and churches didn't support them through their incidents of rape. Rather, they covered up the incidents, leaving most women with no option other than to transfer or leave their churches. Men also sent in stories of childhood molestation, allegedly stating that I was the first to hear their tales.

Silence perpetuates the detrimental affects abuse has on victims who lack a place for their voices to be heard.

**Sexualized violence affects everyone** and is a widespread issue in the United States. According to a 2010 survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States." That includes 12 million women and men who are affected by abuse and more than 1 million women who are raped each year. To break it down further, one in four women and one in nine men will be sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetimes. And these statistics don't include the 54 percent of rapes and sexual assaults that are not reported to the police, according to Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

Yet, regardless of these statistics, the majority in the Mennonite church seems uninterested in discussing the topic. There are many reasons why: The idea of sexualized violence happening in our communities is threatening; it involves the "controversial" subject of sex; bringing up situations of assault can create conflict within our churches; those who experience sexualized violence also encounter severe stigma and shame, and many congregants are simply ignorant about the subject and lack the proper knowledge in how prevalent sexualized violence is.

The truth is that when 1 in 5 female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner, or when 15 out of 16 rapists never spend a day in jail, these statistics do not exclude the Mennonite community. It happens in our churches, homes, schools and backyards. And sadly, ignoring the topic will not make it go away—instead, silence perpetuates the detrimental affects abuse has on victims who lack a place for their voices to be heard.

What can our Mennonite communities do about it?

Rape is an expression of masculinity and a fear of losing one's strength and domination in the world.

**We can start by debunking rape myths** apparent in our churches.

Rape culture is a sociological concept that explains the prevalent attitudes, norms, practices and tolerance toward rape and sexualized violence. In rape culture—a culture that exists within religion and Christianity—people are surrounded by language, laws, rules and images that perpetuate rape myths and make sexual coercion appear so normal that sexualized violence seems inevitable. Behaviors associated with rape culture include victim-blaming, stigma, shame and the trivialization of rape, all prevalent forces in our churches. Rape has literally been engrained in our consciousness.

The following are rape myths especially prevalent in Christian circles:

**Myth 1: Rape has to do with male "lust," a biological need and impulse controlling male sexual urge.**

**Truth:** The roots of rape go much deeper than sex. Instead, rape falls into the categories of violence, power, entitlement, domination and control. It's an expression of masculinity and a fear of losing one's strength and domination in the world. It's often a view of sexual entitlement, where a man is under the impression that he is somehow owed a sexual exchange.

According to Lindsey and Justin Holcomb, authors of *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault*, "studies show that 50 percent of sexual assaults are premeditated and well-planned, not impulsive, spontaneous, uncontrollable sexual acts. This supports the view that sexual assault is learned behavior and does not arise from just biological need."

**Myth 2: Rape is just a woman's issue, or for those who have personal experience with it.**

**Truth:** Rape happens most often to women, but men experience it, too. Yet it's important to keep in mind that most men aren't rapists, some women are rapists, and some people who aren't men or women or heterosexual still have experiences with the crime of rape and abuse. Turning on the news, you'll be confronted with the harsh reality that rape happens all around us. Last December a California judge suggested that women are only truly victims of sexual assault if they put up a fight and had to struggle. What if next it's your daughter in a court with the judge who claims her rape wasn't legitimate because she didn't put up a fight? And when, according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, one in three women on the planet will be raped, beaten, sexually coerced, trafficked or otherwise abused in her lifetime, you most likely stare straight into the face of a survivor every day you interact with other people.

**Myth 3: Sexual assault and rape only happen when physical force, violence and/or weapons are used.**

**Truth:** Following up on the California judge's comments, sexual assault happens even when the victim doesn't "put up a struggle." Assault is any kind of unwanted act, usually sexual in nature whether verbally or physically, that is imposed on a person. When consent is not given yet sexual contact or behavior is made, this is grounds for assault. Sexual assault comes in a variety of ways, including verbal intimidation, coercion, manipulation, threats, deception, commands, abuse of authoritative position, or force and violence. Even when someone has agreed to sexual intimacy, they can still experience assault or rape. A person may feel OK with one type of sexual activity but not wish to pursue in another, and a person has the right not to go further if they don't wish to.

**Myth 4: Rape and sexual assaults happen to women who dress immodestly, who have been drinking or who are somehow "asking for it" in another way.**

**Truth:** No person asks to be assaulted regardless of what they wear, where they go or what activities they participate in. All races, genders and ages are raped. In September 2012, a 73-year-old woman was raped in New York's Central Park. Each year 15 percent of sexual assault victims are under age 12. Using the argument of modesty is a rape excuse, and blaming alcohol becomes a rape apology. We must eliminate these ideas from our consciousness in order to be a supportive church toward survivors.

**Myth 5: The most common perpetrators of rape and abuse are strangers to the victim.**

**Truth:** Unfortunately this is not the case. In fact, 80 percent of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. This includes family members, dating partners, spouses, best friends, pastors, teachers, neighbors, doctors, therapists and others. To believe that "rape can't happen here" is only detrimental to those who experience it in your community.

As a peace church we stand in a significant position to take a stand against sexualized violence and abuse.

As a peace church we stand in a significant position to take a stand against sexualized violence and abuse. It is our responsibility to care about this topic and address this epidemic rampant in our world. Together, by understanding these myths and refusing to let them exist in our churches, we can knock down prejudices and negative stereotypes about sexual assault victims. We can share the psychological and emotional distress victims experience. We can create open, safe and supportive spaces for victims to come forward, and we can believe and validate women and men's stories about abuse. We can prevent and eliminate feelings of guilt, shame and self-blame that victims tend to have.

Rather than having sexual assault victims present in our communities, we can have sexual assault survivors who know they are strong, empowered and—through the love we show them—can learn to love themselves regardless of the abuse they've experienced. We must let survivors know that acknowledging and naming what happened to them is both an important step in the healing process and necessary for putting an end to stigmatizing sexual assault and abuse in our churches.

Let's send out the message of Our Stories Untold loud and clear: Survivors, we will be here for you when you are ready.

*Rachel Halder is a member of West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa.*

## Website a 'safe and open space'

When Rachel Halder began the Our Stories Untold website, she never expected to reunite two women who had not spoken for 30 years, following an incident of sexual violence.

In November 2012, Rachel posted an anonymous story from a woman who was raped by two male students at a Mennonite college in the 1980s on Our Stories Untold. In the story, the woman described a "dorm do-gooder" who found her after the incident and offered her support.

The "dorm do-gooder" found the story on Halder's website and identified herself.

Iowa Mennonite School

She posted a comment, "I am deeply sorry for my role in what you went through. I seethed with anger for the rest of that semester. I know it was nothing compared to what you went through, but I now knew that none of us [was] safe."

Halder then connected the two women by sharing their email addresses, which led to them corresponding.

"I didn't anticipate something that restorative happening," Halder says. "It was amazing what came out of it."

Halder began the Our Stories Untold website and blog in June 2012 as a "safe and open space to discuss sexualized violence within the Mennonite church." Halder lives in Iowa City and attends area Mennonite churches. She graduated from Goshen (Ind.) College in 2010.

So far, the response is supportive and positive. "I'm surprised by people who come up to me that I don't know and tell me that they read my website," Halder says.

Halder began this project out of working with Joanna Shenk and Hilary Scarsella on the Women in Leadership Taskforce with Mennonite Church USA. They, along with several other women, are working on "Mennonite Monologues," a collection of women's stories. Shenk is communication coordinator and interchurch relations associate for Mennonite Church USA. Scarsella is associate for transformative peacemaking and communications.

Since launching Our Stories Untold, Halder has been speaking at Mennonites churches and peace-related conferences. In February, Halder spoke (see photo) at her former high school, Iowa Mennonite School in Kalona, where she said the students were very receptive.

She hopes to broaden her audience to other Christian denominations and is exploring founding a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based on Our Stories Untold.

Our Stories Untold website is at www.ourstoriesuntold.com and its Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/OurStoriesUntold.—*Anna Groff*

This is the third of a Bible study series by different authors on the key Scripture texts for Mennonite Church USA's next biennial convention, to be held July 1-6 in Phoenix. The convention's Scripture texts are Psalm 24:1, Philippians 3:20-21, Romans 5:1-5 and Ephesians 2:14-22. See www.mennoniteusa.org/convention.

PHOENIX 2013
CITIZENS
of God's Kingdom
HEALED IN HOPE

### A reflection on Romans 5:1-5

# An 'illegal' on justification

by Marco Saavedra

What does an "illegal" have to say about justification? I mean, really, what does someone who has been judged (or prejudged) to have broken the law and is therefore not protected by it tell us—the church, the nation, sinners, lost and broken individuals—about gospel truth?

To us, at least, it means that a people, our people—numbering close to 11 million—who are living outside the law and outside the grace of so many of our neighbors need to exhibit faith even more as an act of survival. It is a gift that our very existence is an act of worship and a testament to our beliefs that are and will remain greater than discrimination, detainment and deportation.

And this is the lesson to all others who similarly find themselves removed and estranged from their homes and themselves: That we are all at some level misplaced due to sin and that we all need benefit from the fulfillment of the gospel as it brings about a new creation both within and outside ourselves.

That is not the starting point for many who wish to talk about immigration. Really, immigration is only a metaphor that exposes what people already hold as truth and what justifications they have depended on as a definition for their identity.

### Justified through faith

Who can dare live on faith alone? Especially when there are so many other markers for identity: possessions, power, idolatry, social positions, physical semblances. It is almost too liberating to say that belief alone is required to have:

**peace with God**

achieved *through* the life, light and love of *Jesus Christ.*

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding;

The reconciliation with all creation which has been yearned for since the fall,

The ability to know your first love,

and commune with the source of all life.

Here is where humility comes in: displaced people who have been stripped of their tradition, native land and tongue, who have crossed borders, deserts and laws, who have forsaken their pride, perhaps lost dignity and traded in their comfort for the livelihood of their loved ones, know something about communion with *God through Christ*. They know deeply about the disenchanted systems of identity we have created, because they cannot be defined by bureaucratic and unimaginative laws, by a culture of fear and terror or by the violence we think necessary to preserve our way of life. The "illegal," the migrant, who is too poor and desperate to wait for the world to change into what it should be, changes reality in greater accordance with the gospel when he or she dares to take on whatever circumstance, challenge and threat in pursuit of life (in flight from death), *justified* solely *through faith*.

This should inconvenience anyone who is "legal," ensconced comfortably in a world that is demeaning to those who do not have documents. This should trouble the believer who partakes in a machine—with which we are all at some level complicit—that deports 1,000 people every day and sends forth waves of separation and distress at the loss of a family member multiplied over a million times.

Particularly in this recent season of Lent, we were forced to remember the Passion of Christ—an all-giving sacrifice to bestow on us the gift of an all-forgiving grace. We rejoice in the resurrection of Christ and suffer the cost of sin, too. This seemingly impossible paradox of holding horror and glory simultaneously is not unlike living illegally. People who suffer persecution fully value everything that could be lost if they were imprisoned, so both liberty and captivity take on greater meaning.

> Immigration is only a metaphor that exposes what people already hold as truth and what justifications they have depended on as a definition for their identity.

### Glory, tribulation, patience, experience, hope

Expanding on the metaphor of the migrant, aren't we all finding our way home? Aren't we all harried for years on end, searching for rest and delight? Isn't that why in Revelation the redeemed are all given a new name after suffering a lifetime of removal from truth and alienation from God?

This is why sharing our stories is so crucial and so sacred, because it allows for the expression of our true selves and true loves. In another letter to the Corinthians, Paul says, in brief, "If I know all and have all and have not love, I am nothing." This then proves the inverse correct: If I am, *then* I love, am loved and am beloved. That love allows us to understand and to prophesy. At a more elemental level, the initial breath of life that awakened us from dust is the means through which creation begins and the Gospel of John is delivered, through the Word.

Therefore, if we are meant to live out God's kingdom and begin doing so today—for heaven is at hand—then everyone should be welcomed to the water and allowed to drink freely and bid the Spirit and the Bride's calling come. That is our definition of celestial citizenship—a beloved community where every voice is held on high, every tear is wiped from our faces, all things old are made anew, and fear, shame, guilt and hate are overcome by faith, hope and love.

### And hope maketh not ashamed

I grew up ashamed of who I was. I was ashamed of our poverty, our beauty, of my aunts and mother speaking our native Oaxaca's *Mixteco* during subway commutes, of being fat, brown, unpopular and unattractive. I was ashamed of where we lived and of how many lies I had to tell others (and convinced myself about) because I could not say I was undocumented. I kept one of my biggest truths hidden, and the nearly insurmountable despair left me a hopeless child, teen and man.

> The only thing worse than actively working toward systemic and spiritual change is to allow current processes and pathologies to continue.

### The love of God is shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost

My shame clouded the fact that the "Holy Ghost over the bent world broods" ("God's Grandeur" by Gerard Manley Hopkins). I was too ashamed to hear "Love bidding me welcome" ("Love" by George Herbert). I was too ashamed to trust others with my story, and therefore I indicted myself with the identity of being illegal. I was too ashamed to risk being vulnerable and experiencing the pain that produces patience, hope and glory.

The pain is not yet gone, and the restorative process of reconciliation continues, but at least the peace of God, comfort from the Spirit and intercessions by Jesus also add their healing balm to the wounds.

### Subverting expectations and holding paradoxical thoughts in communion

### We glory in tribulation

This letter to the church in Rome is not easy, and neither is its message: Abide not by the empire's ways (despite living in its epicenter) but trust faith alone.

Similarly, every time we go before a magistrate or judge in court, stand before a classroom or parish, or are seized by a deportation officer or a police agent, we know we are in the right and thereby can trust our community organizing to deliver us, because the light of truth can only shine when darkness is confronted, because the healing gospel can only save when applied to the scars.

We use our experienced pain as authority over what we've yet to overcome and as legitimacy for our cause. We know that things cannot continue as they stand. We know the deep calling for change and the urgency of the moment. It is exhausting, arresting and tiresome and at times almost despairing. But the only thing worse than actively working toward systemic and spiritual change is to allow current processes and pathologies to continue. Thereby we become true citizens of God's kingdom, as agents of reconciliation to "change this miserable condition that exists on this Earth" (Malcolm X).

Last month, I told Judge Bain that I did nothing wrong when I crossed the border at age 3, and I was right. Yet this single truth took years to develop. If not for my friends, family and faith, I could not have gone before the law with the uncompromising position that the burden of proof was not on me and with the confidence that I could (we could) take on whatever decision came from the court—even a removal order—and fight it and win.

This is what we have discovered: When we come out, we are safe. When we organize, we develop power and can rely on the truth of our experience and courage of our convictions because they have been developed in a wellspring of a deeply loving faith.

This testament is needed as an awakening for the church, again. When Isaiah says every hill shall be made low and every valley lifted up, Jesus responds. The prisoners will be released, the brokenhearted will be healed, and a babe, a sex worker and, yes, definitely yes, an "illegal" can point toward justice flowing down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

*Marco Saavedra is an undocumented poet and painter in New York City who worships at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in the South Bronx. Originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, he was raised in New York and studied in Massachusetts, Ohio and Washington, D.C. He works with the National Immigrant Youth Alliance, educating and organizing and helping stop deportations. Marco is pictured here at the annual DREAM Act Graduation in Washington, D.C., with Alejandra Tellez, mother of Julio Tellez, whose deportation was stopped through community organizing.*

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Moniqua Acosta** was on the Mennonite Central Committee Women's Concern Advisory Board about 10 years ago and served as interim director of Women's Concerns for eight months. She helped plan the Women Doing Theology Conference (The Red Tent). She also served on her church board for many years. She is on the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School quarterly board, the Philhaven board and two committees with Lancaster Mennonite Conference (decadal planning and celebrating church life).

Persevering and showing my commitment to the body has made an impression over the years.—Moniqua Acosta

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**

Yes, I have many women leaders who serve as mentors. Some are older and some younger. I have learned tremendously from their life experiences, whether successes or failures. My mentors serve as a sounding board for me. When I have doubts about direction or certain challenges in my life, they are there mainly to listen but also to provide me with honest truths.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**

I'm teaching the middle school Sunday school class at church and have begun to interact more with our junior youth group at church. My youngest daughter, Isabela, is in the middle school class, and my oldest daughter, Andrea, is in the junior youth group. It is important to me that the girls in these groups have a positive experience with church. I'm trying to be a consistent part of the lives of these young people because I see all of them having the potential to be leaders.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**

This is difficult to answer. The young girls in my church are living in a different family setting than I did, but they still deal with some of the same societal stressors. They have a different way of communicating with one another, which is something I am learning.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**

I've faced some opposition over the years in my church family as I became a leader. Being a woman who is educated and not from an immigrant family and who is relatively young, I've faced some roadblocks and experienced sexism in my years in the Spanish-speaking Anabaptist world. Persevering and showing my commitment to the body has made an impression over the years. I have not left my church or given up on my brothers and sisters, and they have done the same with me.

**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**

I'm encouraged by the everlasting love of my Creator, my husband and all the strong women and men who have come before me and who are still working at dismantling racism, sexism, ageism and any form of oppression to another human being. I know I'm not alone and should never feel that way. I know I have others who will follow me (my children specifically) and that I, as well as those before me and after me, have a part to play until our Lord calls us home.

A counterculture gospel for the people

# Jesus' 'feminine' wisdom

by Bert Newton

For those who follow Jesus' way of love and nonviolence, these are difficult times. Both major parties in the United States boast of their nationalism and their machismo enthusiasm to hunt down "terrorists." The corporate and Wall Street elite maintain a stranglehold on our political system, and we, the people, find ourselves virtually shut out of the political process. The greed-based Mammon economy, long the scourge of the poor, now threatens to destroy the very planet on which we live. More than ever we need the good news of God's counterculture wisdom.

John's Gospel proclaims, "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of a man, but of God" (1:12-13). These verses proclaim the good news of a counterculture gospel. They powerfully mark off the counterculture community of God's people and elevate the status of the common poor who follow Jesus, declaring them God's children.

In many societies of the ancient world, the ruling classes were thought to have the blood of the gods; they were the children of the gods; only their opinions mattered, and they controlled politics, economics and religion. Over against this ruling class mythology and domination, the Hebrew Scriptures asserted that the common people are made in the image of God; in ancient Israel, the people, not just the rulers, were God's children.

Born "not of blood," refers to the nonviolent ethic of the community.

**Not long before Jesus was born**, the propaganda of the Roman Empire proclaimed the Roman emperor "the Son of God." One inscription from Myra reads, "Divine Augustus Caesar, Son of God … Benefactor and Savior of the whole world." Horace sang of Augustus, "Thine age, O Caesar, has brought back fertile crops to the fields … has wiped away our sins and revived the ancient virtues." The New Testament writers countered by proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God with the power to take away sin and that all who follow him are his brothers and sisters, children of God, endowed with the same power to forgive and to heal.

Biblical writers lifted up the common people as God's children, having power and authority to heal, forgive, judge, rule and speak for God.

John's Gospel uses the metaphor of rebirth and stipulates that the common people who follow Jesus are born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God." The three ways John states that this new community of Jesus-followers is not born point to the counterculture wisdom and practice of the early church.

Born "not of blood," refers to the nonviolent ethic of the community. The Greek word for "blood" is actually plural, "bloods," a Hebrew idiom used in both the ancient Hebrew and Greek versions of Israel's holy texts to mean "violence" (see Micah 3:10, Habbakuk 2:12, Hosea 4:2, 1 Kings 2:5, 33, 2 Kings 9:7, 26). The children of God are not children of violence. The Gospel of John goes on to illustrate the nonviolent practice of the community: Jesus stops Peter from using violence to defend him and instead declares that his own nonviolent martyrdom will be the means by which he will drive out "the ruler of this world" (12:31-33), the spirit that inhabits all oppressive systems.

**Born "not of the will of the flesh"** refers to the transfamilial, transtribal, transnational nature of the church. Those "born of flesh" are born into particular families, particular tribes and nations, but those born of the Spirit are no longer bound by the categories of the fleshly or biological birth. The reign of God is transnational. Nationalism, tribalism, racism and the like have no place in this new community.

Born "not of the will of a man" refers to the break with the patriarchal system. (The Greek word for "man" is necessarily male; it cannot be made inclusive by the NRSV.) The ancient Mediterranean world was highly patriarchal. The Roman Empire was structured and largely held together through interconnecting pyramids of familial patriarchies with the emperor conceived of as the grand patriarch at the top. To be born of God, according to John, was to break with this whole patriarchal system and its patriarchal values. The ethos of the new community was to be an ethos of mutual love and service, demonstrated in John's Gospel by Jesus when he gets down on his knees and washes the feet of his disciples.

Scholars have noticed that Jesus' teachings often inverted the male honor code of his day. This ancient code honored the powerful, men able to subjugate others to their will. Jesus turned this honor code on its head; he declared that the servant, not the one being served, is the honorable ("blessed") one. This inversion of the male honor code might be understood as the promotion of a female honor code. The New Testament consistently declares that Jesus is the Wisdom of God (e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:24; Matthew 11:19), a female figure in Proverbs, Sirach, Wisdom and Baruch that scholars call "Lady Wisdom." Nowhere is the portrayal of Jesus as Lady Wisdom stronger than in the Gospel of John, where Jesus consistently talks and acts like Lady Wisdom, sometimes all but quoting her (compare John 7:34 with Proverbs 1:28-29; and John 6:22-59 with Proverbs 9:5 and Sirach 24:19-21).

This female aspect of Jesus' persona does not lead, as some might fear, to a meek and passive Jesus. Lady Wisdom is nothing if not assertive and loud, even brash, much like Jesus in the Gospel of John. Jesus as Wisdom gives us a strong, assertive, nonviolently aggressive, "feminine" champion of the outcast and the common poor.

Our current culture, shaped by capitalism and empire, celebrates the rich and the powerful, those who are able to establish the greatest dominance over other people and the earth. Our culture is still caught in the grip of a "masculine" domination way of thinking and acting. This ethos has fueled the military, economic and environmental crises of our times. The wars waged by the United States constantly multiply. The economic crisis continues to hang over our heads, threatening our homes, jobs and retirements. Global warming, species extinction and other environmental developments threaten the global ecosphere that sustains civilization as we know it. We desperately need a different wisdom.

Jesus' teachings often inverted the male honor code of his day.

**The gospel provides us this different wisdom** in Jesus the Messiah. He incarnates for us, and through us, a counterculture way of living that turns the dominant culture way of life upside down. He provides us an assertive, nonviolently aggressive wisdom that can drive out the spirit of violence and domination, so that we can establish a new heavens and a new earth through the way of mutual love, cooperation and a reverence for God's creation.

There was a time when we in the wealthier and more privileged classes of the world could merely look to this different wisdom as an ideal to be reached sometime in the future. The havoc wreaked upon the world's poor by the systems of oppression and domination did not usually touch us. The current global environmental crisis is quickly bringing that era to a close. Scientists tell us that if the concentration of carbon dioxide ($CO^2$) in the atmosphere grows greater than 350 parts per million (ppm) we enter the danger zone, putting our world on a path that threatens civilization as we know it. We are far past 350 ppm and are quickly closing in on 400 ppm. A recent study, published in the science journal *Nature*, predicts that we could cross the tipping point for global ecological collapse by 2025. The wisdom of Jesus is no longer a matter of theoretical inspiration; it is now a matter of our own survival.

*Bert Newton is a member of Pasadena (Calif.) Mennonite Church and author of* Subversive Wisdom: Sociopolitical Dimensions of John's Gospel *(Wipf and Stock, 2012).*

# What does an immigrant look like?

**John D. Thiesen** is an archivist for the Mennonite Church USA Archives in North Newton, Kan., and co-director of libraries at Bethel College. He is a member of Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

What faces come to mind when you hear the word "immigrant"? I think of several different faces:

- most of my predecessors in the archives and historical library where I work, the people who built these collections to help people answer questions about the Mennonite past: Cornelius H. Wedel (first president of Bethel College), H.R. Voth, Abraham Warkentin, Cornelius Krahn;
- many of the people who created the documents in the archives: Of the first 50 collections of personal papers in the archives, two-thirds were created by immigrants, and almost all the other third was created by second-generation immigrants (children of foreign-born parents);
- my mother, grandparents and most of my relatives in their generations.

Even within the church, it's discouraging that one too often finds indifference or even hostility toward immigrants and their concerns.

**In 2010, a museum exhibit designer** contacted me at the archives, looking for material to represent Mennonites as one of many known immigrant groups in Kansas. This was part of an exhibit she was preparing for the U.S. District Court of the state of Kansas as part of the court's 150th anniversary commemoration. (The federal district court in Kansas City, Kan., oversees citizenship and naturalization matters in Kansas.)

She wanted something that would make a coherent package—naturalization papers, photos, basic narratives of the people. We have a good number of such documents in the archives at Bethel, but what seemed easiest to put together into a complete package was from my own family. I was able to represent the major Mennonite immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe of the 1870s as well as immigrants of the 1920s.

As I've reflected on my childhood years in the mid-1960s, I've come to recognize that I had certain experiences that differed dramatically from those of the majority of my schoolmates and acquaintances at that time. Neither of my parents spoke English until they started school. In family settings, I frequently heard people speaking non-English languages and people who spoke English with a noticeable accent. I traveled outside the United States at age 2, which was especially unusual for a blue collar/pink collar family like mine. My parents went out of their way to make connections with a good number of immigrants and international visitors in the Newton area, not all of them Mennonites. We regularly received mail from Germany, Sweden, Paraguay and Colombia. A couple of times a year, my grandmother received letters with a little red hammer and sickle stamp from her childhood friend and cousin in the Soviet Union. This was during the Cold War; it must have been incredibly rare for Newton, Kan.

**On average, individual U.S. Mennonites** probably have more of an international network than a typical American, considering Mennonites' involvement in missions and relief/development work. However, I seem to see a difference in immigrant consciousness between two different white ethnic Mennonite groups. For the Swiss-German Mennonites, who are predominant especially in the eastern half of the country, immigration is usually something in the distant past. For the Dutch-Russian Mennonites, who are predominant in the Plains states (and Canada), immigration is still in many cases a "living memory." The younger immigrants of the 1870s lived into the 1930s and '40s, which means that many older people alive today are the grandchildren of the immigrant generation. In my own family, this living memory of immigration could last almost to the 22nd century, as those who are now teenagers remember their immigrant grandparents.

Being situated in this dense network of family and community ties to immigrants, I find the current anti-immigrant bigotry deeply unsettling. Even within the church, it's discouraging that one too often finds indifference or even hostility toward immigrants and their concerns.

An implicit message of the federal court's exhibit seems to be a pushback against the contemporary popular bigotry against immigrants. Immigrants are not strange insidious threats, the exhibit says; they are potential Americans, they are us. They are intimately familiar faces. What does an immigrant look like? A lot like me. TM

# Can we connect pastors and business leaders?

**David M. Miller** is pastor at Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford, Neb.

There seems to be something going on in the Mennonite church—and I like it. Last October, I attended the Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series at Hesston (Kan.) College. The topic was "Top-Down Servant Leadership," led by John Stahl-Wert, president and CEO of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation and Serving Leaders.

He spoke about the need for leaders to reconnect their work to purpose by focusing more on serving others than just making a profit.

Participants were encouraged to see leadership and authority the way Jesus modeled it—by leading others to grow in relationship with Christ and leading them in such a way that they flourish and become all God wants them to be.

**From a biblical viewpoint**, Stahl-Wert shared five powerful actions intended to transform any team, church or community from his book *The Serving Leader for the People of God.*

Later in the fall, I also attended the Mennonite Economic Development Associates convention in Niagara Falls, Ont., where the topic was "Business as a Calling."

If it were not for businesspeople we may not have had the gospel.

One particular workshop, just for pastors and businesspeople, focused on learning how to partner in leadership and ministry. Business leaders and pastors both provide leadership in their communities and congregations.

As followers of Christ, both wish to discern God's call on their lives, work for God's purposes in the world and extend God's reign of justice and peace in their communities.

Yet despite these common goals, business leaders and pastors sometimes encounter barriers to pursuing a shared vision. This workshop was led by David B. Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

We explored how business leaders and pastors can connect in a meaningful way with each other and jointly contribute to "God-activity" both inside and outside the congregation. During the session, the participants broke out into two caucus groups—for pastors and for businesspeople.

Pastors were asked to share how they experience businesspeople in the congregation. Do pastors really understand the needs of businesspeople? Can they relate? Are pastors intimidated by their wealth, power and/or prestige?

Business leaders were asked how they experience the church. Do they feel as though they are only needed for their money? How can the church see them as having other gifts to share? Do they feel supported by their pastor for also doing kingdom work or is it only reserved for Sunday mornings?

The results were compiled from both caucus groups and shared collectively. It was a great start to a long-overdue conversation.

**As first a businessperson** for 21 years and now a pastor for five years, I have a great passion for these two groups to connect. The real work of ministry doesn't just happen on Sunday.

It takes place Monday through Friday, when Christian businesspeople have opportunity to interact with their co-workers, customers and community. It's been said that "church begins on Monday," so how can the church empower and better equip those to do the work of ministry? (See Ephesians 4:12).

Both pastors and business leaders need to recognize that we are in the same business—the "people business." Jesus had to remind his own parents that he was to "be about my Father's business," which was to love and serve people. Isn't that the reason Jesus came—to serve and not be served?

If it were not for businesspeople we may not have had the gospel. Think about the people Jesus chose to walk alongside him. Of the 12, at least four were fishermen, one was a tax collector and one was an accountant. Jesus bridged the gap and partnered with businesspeople to preach the gospel and advance the kingdom.

I am excited to see this chasm between these two groups start to close because both are vital to kingdom work here on earth. Can we keep this conversation going and reach across the pew?

I'm toying with the idea of starting a Christian Business Leaders Association in my community. What might you or your congregation be willing to do to advance God's kingdom together?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Two resolutions for Phoenix 2013

## A resolution on the Israel-Palestine conflict will not be offered.

At its last meeting before the delegate assembly in Phoenix in July, the Executive Board (EB) of Mennonite Church USA met April 4-6 in Kansas City, Mo., and decided to send to delegates two resolutions for their consideration.

One resolution, "Protecting and Nurturing Our Children and Youth," seeks to raise awareness of child abuse and neglect and encourage the adoption of policies and practices to protect children and youth in the church community. Because of concern for liability issues, the board decided to recommend its adoption, "pending legal counsel."

**Another resolution, on creation care,** calls for congregations and members to care for creation as part of the good news of Jesus Christ. EB members recommended this without discussion.

A third resolution, on Israel/Palestine, had gone to the Constituency Leaders Council's meeting in March for discussion.

However, said Dave Boshart and David Sutter, co-chairs of the resolutions committee, "nearly all table groups at CLC discouraged or had significant reservations about presenting the resolution … to the delegate assembly."

The committee did agree that the topic was important, and EB's executive committee asked, What do we want to achieve?

Eventually, EB agreed on the following: "Executive Board desires to have conversation in the church which helps us understand both Israeli and Palestinian narratives and the Christian and American narrative in relation to them, and which helps us understand how we interpret the Bible in regard to these issues, particularly how we understand Christian Zionism."

**In an unprecedented occurrence,** much of EB's business time was spent in executive session, which means the press is not allowed to report on what is said.

In an April 8 email, moderator Dick Thomas said: "We spent about one-third of our meeting in either executive session or in session with agency staff and media present [but] where we requested no reporting of the conversation. Some of this conversation had to do with internal board processes and some with matters of discernment that will be reported after further conversation with individuals or groups that could not be at the board meeting."

In other business, EB decided to reduced its number of meetings per biennium from seven to six, with one meeting in a non-convention year held by teleconference and the summer meeting in a convention year held at the convention site, with no meeting in the fall. EB members recognized the need for cutting budget but lamented the loss of meeting time. Larry Hauder said, "It's hard to build relationships with fewer meetings."

Executive director Ervin Stutzman said that the Purposeful Plan, which guides the work of the church, did not say anything about "our need for God."

The board agreed to add the following to the document: "We recognize that because of sin, all have fallen short of the Creator's intent, marred the image of God in which we were created, disrupted order in the world and limited our love for others. Therefore, through the reconciling power of Jesus Christ, we seek to walk in righteousness, or 'right-relatedness' with God and others."

And in the section under Holistic Christian Witness, they added the following sentence: "Our allegiance to Jesus Christ calls us to love our enemies, demonstrating our willingness to die for our convictions but not to kill for them."
*—Gordon Houser*

## Executive Board approves Church Extension Services transfer

At the Executive Board's meeting April 4-6 in Kansas City, Mo., board members approved the March action of the Church Extension Services board to transfer responsibility for administering the CES church loan program to Everence (see page 35). CES will then be phased out as a separate entity. All the assets and liabilities related to CES will be transferred to Everence, except for $250,000 of equity to be placed in an Executive Board restricted fund to advance ministries consistent with the mission of CES. "The money will likely be invested back into the church loan program, and only the interest would be used for other ministries," said Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

CES was managed by a board that was accountable to Mennonite Church USA. For the last couple of years, the CES board functioned under the oversight of Everence, which provided financial expertise and advice. On March 14, the CES board met and approved the recommendation from CES and Everence to transfer all assets and liabilities of CES to Everence Association. "Everence's goal is to expand the reach of the original CES mission," Stutzman said. "First, they hope to serve more emerging and disadvantaged congregations. In addition, they want to expand their impact to include new forms of ministry and outreach to communities."*—Marty Lehman, director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA*

# Mennonites in Phoenix number 1,000

## Two pastors note that members care for undocumented in spite of state law.

Mennonites preparing to gather July 1-6 in Phoenix for the biennial convention of Mennonite Church USA may wonder what kind of presence Mennonites have offered in this city of nearly 1.5 million residents —the sixth most populous city in the United States.

Steve Good, pastor of Sunnyslope Mennonite Church in downtown Phoenix, says the Mennonite presence in Phoenix began in the 1940s.

"Doctors sent people here from all over the country in hopes that a drier climate would bring relief from allergies, arthritis, asthma and all sorts of other ailments," he says. "We began as a gathering of the sick."

Peter Wiebe, former pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church, adds that Phoenix experienced another influx of Mennonites in the 1960s, when many young adults came to the city as voluntary service workers and students.

"They worked mostly with people in poverty, with migrants and with those who were ill in hospitals," he says.

**Today, Mennonites in Phoenix number** around 1,000 and belong to at least 10 churches. There are six Mennonite Church USA congregations, three Conservative Mennonite Conference congregations and one Church of God in Christ Mennonite (also known as Holdeman Mennonite) church.

"We consider ourselves an ecumenical community," Wiebe says. "Since there aren't many of us Anabaptists around here, we have to stick together."

Wiebe says that Mennonite leaders in the Valley [of the Sun] have enjoyed gathering for conversation when opportunities have arisen to connect with guests from the wider Mennonite church. "We are far from the Mennonite heartlands, and every 'outside' resource here is special," he says.

Many Mennonite initiatives in Phoenix are supported by congregations within and outside of Mennonite Church USA.

For example, Glencroft Retirement Community was started by Mennonites, Brethren, Quakers and the Apostolic Church, according to Wiebe. This member organization of Mennonite Health Services Alliance provides housing for 900 residents with a continuum of care.

"Mennonites are quite involved in Glencroft, but the services provided by Glencroft definitely reach the wider Phoenix community," Wiebe says.

House of Refuge and House of Hope are transitional homes that provide long-term assistance to men and women, respectively, who make a commitment to develop the skills necessary to recover from poverty and homelessness. While 25 to 30 congregations support these ministries, Sunnyslope Mennonite Church has been the primary support for House of Refuge for more than 25 years.

First Mennonite Church of Phoenix reaches out to the city through a weekly Wednesday after-school program for more than 40 at-risk youth. Pastor Al Whaley says they pick up youth from the neighborhood in two vehicles—one seating 30 and the other 15—and bring them to the church for planned activities.

"All the teachers are beyond retirement age, and the youth are in grades 1 to 12," he says. "We have the oldsters teaching the youngsters, and it works. They accept us, and this ministry is God's gift to us."

Goldensun, a faith-based organization and residential community that serves adults with special needs, is another Phoenix ministry initiated by Mennonites. The Goldensun community also includes the Phoenix Menno Guest House, which is located near Trinity Mennonite Church and is designed to provide Christian hospitality to visitors and short-term volunteers.

"We believe the guest house supports the Mennonite presence in Phoenix in a good way, helping us connect to the wider Mennonite church and provide an Anabaptist witness to others," says Wiebe.

> [The Mennonite community in Phoenix] began as a gathering of the sick.
> —Peter Wiebe

Participants in Mennonite Mission Network's Service Opportunities for Older People (SOOP) program are regularly hosted by Phoenix Mennonites. Other Mennonites run a house repair program that assists those who can no longer care for their own homes. Still others build homes in Mexico for those in need. And everyone, says Wiebe, cares for their neighbors.

**What kind of impact does Arizona SB1070**, a law that makes it a crime to assist people who are undocumented, have on one's ability to care for one's neighbor in Phoenix?

Pastor Good says, "I have people in my congregation who listen to Rush Limbaugh and others who listen to NPR. But I tell you, if anyone in my church has a neighbor who is hungry, they'll feed them."

Phoenix congregations that belong to Mennonite Church USA through Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference are Christ Life Chapel, First Mennonite Church of Phoenix, Koinonia Mennonite Church (Chandler), Life House Community (Surprise), Sunnyslope Mennonite Church and Trinity Mennonite Church (Glendale).—*Hilary J. Scarsella of Mennonite Church USA*

# God at work: kidneys healed, life restored

## Mission Network worker in Colombia experiences 'miraculous healing.'

Kelsey Hochstetler

Amanda Falla at her home in mid-March.

Amanda Falla believes miracles are considered uncommon because people don't share about them. But Falla cannot keep quiet.

Falla was diagnosed with kidney failure in June 2012. She remembers lying on a hospital bed in Armenia, Colombia, as her blood flowed from one arm to a white machine—about the size of a mini refrigerator—filtering waste before it returned from the machine to the other arm. As a Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) worker in Colombia, Falla's arms were often outstretched, reaching out to neighbors. But this time, Amanda's arms were reaching toward a cold, metal dialysis machine.

We don't hear of miracles because we're too quiet about them!—Amanda Falla

**Amanda and Gamaliel Falla are seasoned** church planters. They spent the last 10 years developing and sending church planters in Miami and along Colombia's north coast. Because of their work, there are now five churches and church plants in the city of Barranquilla and one each in Riohacha and Sahagún. The month that Amanda Falla was diagnosed, the couple had moved to Armenia with the plan to serve from a central location as coordinators of pastoral accompaniment with the Colombia Mennonite Church.

Falla's diagnosis meant that her kidneys were not extracting the necessary fluid from her body. Her hands and feet were swollen, and fluid had entered her lungs. At that point, the doctors, Amanda, Gamaliel and their three children decided that Amanda should move to live with her children near Chicago. Amanda received medical attention from specialists and was near her three grandchildren, ages 16, 10 and 2.

After a few months, Amanda, accompanied by a doctor and their son, David, was transferred to Eduard Hospital in Naperville, Ill. Gamaliel soon followed.

**As citizens of the United States,** Amanda and Gamaliel did not have a problem with visas. Even so, it was no small miracle that the Fallas were able to find a doctor who could assist in transferring Amanda so seamlessly to Chicago, only 15 minutes away from her children.

It was only when Amanda Falla arrived at the hospital and was swarmed with a team of medics that she realized her life was at stake. Yet in a sterile hospital environment and a different culture, with an uncertain future, she continually reminded herself that she was in the hands of God.

When Falla was assigned to a kidney specialist in Chicago, another small miracle happened: The kidney specialist was a fellow Colombian. This was another small reminder that God was with her.

Doctors discovered the cause behind Falla's kidney failure—multiple myeloma, a dangerous form of cancer that starts in the bone marrow. Three times per week, for the next three months, Falla underwent chemotherapy. And each time she had treatment, she prayed for a miracle—if not for physical healing, then perhaps emotional healing. She also continued dialysis for her kidneys.

After three months of treatment, she faced a bone marrow transplant. "God, you have given us all these resources," she prayed during the transplant. "I'll accept whatever happens."

Following the bone marrow transplant, Falla was exhausted but in surprisingly good spirits. She didn't feel the severe pain that often accompanies the operation—only a lack of appetite, another small miracle.

"Her willingness to follow the doctors' advice while praying to God for healing gave a strong testimony of being colaborers with God: doing our part and believing in God's

# Everence purchases Church Extension Services

## CES's mission to be strengthened, expanded through new annuity program

At its March 14 meeting, the Church Extension Services board of directors approved the sale of all Church Extension Services to the Everence Association. (Also see sidebar on page 32). The sale comes as part of an overarching plan to fully integrate CES into Everence, the stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA.

"The financial mission and ministry of Everence is the right fit for the denomination's missional loan program," says Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA's associate executive director for churchwide operations.

Established by the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1958, CES provided loans to congregations and initiatives that have difficulty qualifying through traditional lending institutions, such as urban, new church plants and new immigrant congregations. The fund was supported by the sale of investment securities to mission-driven investors.

Moving the CES program to Everence began in early 2011, when the two organizations' boards of directors were aligned. In April 2012, core CES functions were transferred from Newton, Kan., to the Everence headquarters in Goshen, Ind.

"One of the goals was to grow Church Extension Services into a larger program," says Mark Regier, Everence director of stewardship investing and president of CES. "Everence is able to do that, with its national network of financial professionals. We now are able to help even more congregations and organizations."

With the sale, however, comes a change in the way individuals can participate in the program. The mission of CES will now be carried out through the new Everence Advantage Select High Impact Annuity. Up to 50 percent of the annuity premium dollars will be made available for loans to emerging and socially engaged congregations, nonprofit organizations making environmentally friendly improvements, and community development needs in underserved areas. Church Extension Services investment certificates were liquidated on April 12, and note holders were to receive a check for the principal and accrued interest. Individuals holding a CES certificate may continue their support of emerging congregations by purchasing the Advantage Select High Impact Annuity from Everence. Organizational certificate holders can participate in the OneWorld Community Investment Program.—*Everence*

## God at work (continued from page 34)

sovereignty," says Linda Shelly, director of Latin America mission work with Mennonite Mission Network.

In the next weeks, Falla faced another bout of chemotherapy and an intestinal infection. But she continued her mission work, exchanging prayers for her friends in Colombia, Chicago and Miami, as they prayed for her healing.

Throughout her recovery from the chemotherapy, Falla continued to believe that God would heal her. But even she was not prepared for the news she was about to hear.

When she heard the results of her latest biopsy, she learned that her cancer had gone into remission. "The Lord is good," she said.

As Falla was enduring months of dialysis, the nephrologist, or kidney specialist, encouraged Falla to consider a kidney transplant.

Falla said she would not accept a transplant. "I have faith that God will heal me," she said.

However, Falla changed her mind when she was told that if she wanted to have kidneys that operate properly, she would need to be connected to a dialysis machine for 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"With [everything we have gone through]," Gamaliel wrote in a prayer letter, "we always see God's hand [at work]."

When Amanda Falla heard the doctor's next words, she knew beyond a doubt that God was in control.

"Amanda," he said. "Your kidneys are functioning as normal." Falla didn't need dialysis, a kidney transplant or even medication.

The doctor told Falla that in his many years of professional practice, he had never seen a kidney recover fully.

Falla said she doesn't have words to express how grateful she and her whole family and community are for her recovery. She's uncertain why God chose to heal her, but she knows that God still has work for her to do.

Amanda stressed the importance of sharing the miracles that are experienced. "We don't hear of miracles because we're too quiet about them," she says.

So what does Amanda Falla plan to do now?

"Live for today, give glory to God and share" about her miraculous healing, she says.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Acting for peace through investments

## 'Israel-Palestine Investment Screen' will guide decisions.

Ryan Rodrick Beiler

Jesus said Suffer little children to come unto me:
for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Matt 19 14

Bassem Thabet, MCC Palestine and Israel partner relations director, facilitates a forum of Palestinian and Israeli partner organizations titled, "Developing a Peace Strategy." The group met at Hope Secondary School in the West Bank town of Beit Jala in May 2011.

The board of directors of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. unanimously decided that MCC U.S. will not knowingly invest in companies that benefit from products or services used to perpetrate acts of violence against Palestinians, Israelis and other people groups.

The action, taken at the board's March 16 meeting in Akron, Pa., grew from a call from partners in Palestine and Israel, including churches there, and follows a discernment process with leaders of the denominations that sponsor MCC U.S.

MCC staff in the Middle East delivered the message from churches and other partners in a letter shared about a year ago. MCC has worked with partners in Palestine and Israel for more than 60 years and more than 40 years, respectively.

The board agreed that "all reasonable measures" are to be applied immediately not to support violence in the Palestine and Israel conflict and also that staff should explore "similar actions in support of partners in other parts of the world."

The action means that MCC U.S. will not invest direct holdings in companies on the American Friends Service Committee "Israel/Palestine Investment Screen" list, will choose to invest in mutual funds that limit exposure to companies on the list and will join efforts to encourage the mutual funds that it holds to adopt similar screens.

Staff also will aim to align MCC U.S.'s purchasing patterns with these investment principles.

J. Ron Byler, MCC U.S. executive director, said that while the list names only companies that support Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, perpetrating acts of violence against Israelis is already illegal for Europe- and U.S.-based companies.

"We will take action if we become aware of offenders against Israel," said Byler, "But our government ensures we do no harm to Israel while there is no such care for Palestinians. With our partners, we desire peace, justice and reconciliation for all."

MCC U.S. investments traditionally have mirrored the organization's core Christian values, using vehicles such as socially responsible funds.

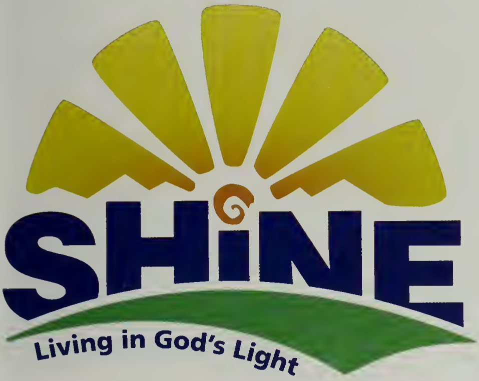
> We will take action if we become aware of offenders against Israel, but our government ensures we do no harm to Israel, while there is no such care for Palestinians.

Byler said another aspect of the action included participating with sponsoring denominations' peacemaking and justice-seeking efforts as invited.

He said opportunities for this exist now with sponsoring denomination Mennonite Church USA.—*Cheryl Zehr Walker of Mennonite Central Committee*

# New children's curriculum coming in fall 2014

## *Shine* co-published by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, logo now set



New logo for *Shine: Living in God's Light*, developed by the project team and designed by Merrill Miller of MennoMedia.

Development of a new Sunday school curriculum called *Shine* is underway by publishers MennoMedia and Brethren Press. In April, writers began work on the first quarter of *Shine: Living in God's Light*, which will be available for use in fall 2014.

The two publishing houses, longtime collaborators, began more than 18 months ago to prepare a successor to their current Sunday school curriculum, *Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News*. For congregations using *Gather 'Round*, the transition to *Shine* will be seamless. *Gather 'Round* was designed to run for eight years, with summer 2014 as the final quarter.

"We're very excited about *Shine*'s emphasis on God's light shining through us," says Rose Stutzman, project director. "As you read the Bible, you notice that the theme of light is pervasive. God's light shines through the darkness—for God's people both then and now."

*Shine*'s foundational Scriptures include Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 5:14-16. "Jesus told us, 'You are the light of the world,'" says Rebecca Seiling, project developer. "*Shine*'s materials take this seriously. They serve to inspire children and their families to be that light in the world around them."

Designed for children ages 3 through grade eight, *Shine* will incorporate the latest understandings of the ways children learn. The material is based on a three-year overview of the Bible, with a separate Bible outline for early childhood (ages 3 to 5).

Sessions include an emphasis on teaching prayer and other spiritual practices and will also highlight peace themes in the Scriptures.

Primary and middler children will read from a hardcover Bible storybook for use at church and at home. Junior youth will read the stories directly from the Bible. The flexible multiage resource serves congregations with a small number of children of different ages.—*MennoMedia staff*

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# Site of May 2011 tornado now closed

## 125 cleanups, nine new builds by 3,300 Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers

Nearly two years after an EF-5 tornado struck Joplin, Mo., Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) closed its project site in Joplin.

On May 22, 2011, the tornado, over a mile wide, cut through the center of Joplin. More than 7,000 homes were completely destroyed, and the town's infrastructure was heavily damaged, including the hospital and school. In addition to the loss of property, 159 lives were lost during the storm, making this disaster the second deadliest tornado in all of U.S. history.

Local MDS volunteers responded to the news of the tornado immediately. Within 24 hours, volunteers were helping clear access roads and were working with local farmers to help move animals to safety. In the weeks to follow, thousands of volunteers poured into the area to begin the job of cleaning up. Weeks later, the first repairs began.

MDS volunteers from Arkansas, Iowa and Missouri traveled back to Joplin to mark the end of MDS's response in Joplin and to celebrate getting families back home.

Kevin King, MDS executive director, joined Larry Hostetler, Missouri Unit chair, and Al and Jan Kroeker, MDS Region III directors, at an evening of celebration and closure. Representatives from partner agencies, including Rebuild Joplin, Fuller Center for Housing, Samaritan's Purse, Joplin Family Worship Center and several families who received a rebuilt home also attended the ceremony and dinner.

This was King's fourth trip to visit the project in Joplin. He says: "I entered [the] town and saw the famous cross at one of the street corners that one of our volunteers carved out of a tree stump. It is now weathered and cracked from the drying sun—proclaiming the injury of the past."

Renee White, chair of the long term recovery committee in Joplin, praised MDS's work, saying, "MDS was integral to the rebuilding here in Joplin. MDS showed us a work ethic. You showed us what humility looks like. You are known not only for the quality structures you build but the spirits that you lifted as well. We are a better and richer community now because of MDS. Thank you."

In the two years that MDS worked in Joplin, more than 3,300 volunteers served, completing 125 cleanups, 23 minor repairs, 25 major repairs and nine new builds.—*MDS*

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# Indy small group has a taste of charity

## Potlucks feature foods that relate to agencies and locations.

J. Daniel Hess

Around the table, members of the Indianapolis small group enjoy ethnic foods, tell personal stories, learn about a charitable organization and share a prayer of blessing.

Among the myriad of agencies asking for money these days, which are the dependable charitable organizations that members of our congregation support?

This question prompted the making of a small group at First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.

Established and led by J.B. Miller, the group, committing to each other for one year, meets monthly at Miller's home for fellowship and study.

"We are learning more about charitable organizations that are part of our congregational life," says Miller.

At each meeting, one member tells what she or he has learned about the mission, the work and the impact of the organization.

Included among the agencies are ministries of Mennonite Church USA, such as Mennonite Mission Network, ecumenical ministries such as Witness for Peace, and local charities such as Wheeler Mission, which provides food and housing for homeless people.

From the beginning, potluck food has been part of each meeting. Members are encouraged to buy ingredients locally and prepare a dish that complements the location where the featured agency is active.

For example, on the day the group learned about Mennonite Disaster Service, the menu featured a southern Christmas meal. Besides this group, First Mennonite Church has 15 other small groups for members and visitors.

The group is intentionally diverse—marrieds and singles, young adults and people who are old enough to be their parents, longtime Mennonites and folks who have recently come from other denominations, and representatives of widely varied vocations, including finance, education, insurance, music, medicine, telephone technology, palliative care, social work and others.

"A highlight for me," says Jen Christophel, "is becoming acquainted with people I normally don't interact with on Sunday morning."—*J. Daniel Hess*

J. Daniel Hess

Klaine Friend (center) eats after leading the prayer at meal time. Beside her is Sofia Christophel Lichti (left) and Kaden Friend.

# 1973 event opened pastorate to women

## New book tells story of Emma Sommers Richards' ordination 30 years ago.

By telling the story of the ordination of Emma Sommers Richards, a new book from the Institute of Mennonite Studies aims to show that "all church members will share in the benefits and blessings that God will shower on faithful Anabaptist Mennonite congregations."

The impact of this first ordination of a woman pastor in the former Mennonite Church is shared from a variety of perspectives in *According to the Grace Given to Her*, just released by IMS at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind. Richards was ordained on June 17, 1973.

Three editors, James E. Horsch, John D. Rempel and Eldon D. Nafziger, and nearly 20 contributors describe the influences and themes of Emma's life that led to her ordination and reflect on what it meant in their lives and ministries.

The book begins with Miriam Book describing the setting of the call to women to serve in the Mennonite church. Then Elaine Sommers Rich, Emma's sister, tells about influences in their family life. Arlene Mark describes other early influences through education and church involvement. Nancy V. Lee tells about the ministry of Emma and E. Joe Richards, her husband, as missionaries in Japan.

Following each of these and the additional chapters are testimonials from pastors for whom Emma was a mentor or source of inspiration, including Dan Schrock, John Gray, Rachel Fisher, David Sutter and Janice Yordy Sutter.

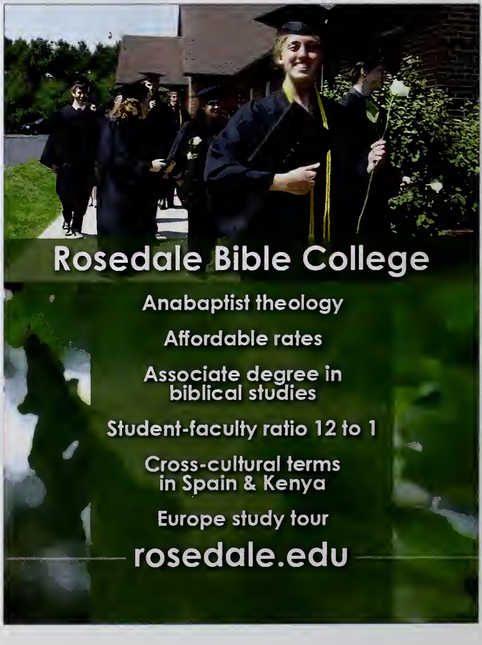
Emma Richards was ordained by the Illinois Mennonite Conference at the request of Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church, where she was serving on the pastoral team.

"It was an ordination that marked a breakthrough in North American Mennonites' understanding that the Holy Spirit calls forth both women and men," said Mary H. Schertz, director of IMS, at a Feb. 26 celebration of the book's release. Also at this celebration, Gayle Gerber Koontz, AMBS professor of theology and ethics, emphasized the significance of this ordination for the church. By 1987, a little more than a decade after Emma's ordination, in the General Conference Mennonite Church there were 44 women licensed or ordained in ministry positions—an estimated 10 percent of pastoral leadership.

"In what we used to call the Old Mennonite Church, by 1986, about 32 women were serving as licensed or ordained pastors, copastors, associate or assistant pastors," Gerber Koontz said. "Two years later the number of women with credentials for pastoral ministry in the Old Mennonite Church jumped to 62. That decade after Emma was ordained was a huge shift."—*Mary E. Klassen of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

Mary E. Klassen

Frances Ringenberg, member of the pastoral team of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., greets Emma Sommers Richards and says, "You were the first woman pastor I ever saw." Richards was pastor of Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church, where Ringenberg was a member.



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# Harder was passionate about the urban church

## 'Harder-Kauffman Report' provided important sociological data in the 1970s.

Leland Harder, a scholar of both Anabaptist history and Anabaptists of the late 1900s, died March 21 in North Newton, Kan. He was 86. Harder was a pastor, seminary professor and sociologist who combined all these areas to make significant contributions to the church during his lifetime of ministry.

Leland Harder

In 1958, Harder and Bertha, his wife, joined the new faculty of Mennonite Biblical Seminary when it began on the Elkhart, Ind., campus. Over the next 25 years, he taught at the seminary and served briefly as associate director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies (IMS). In addition he was pastor of two congregations and served the church in many other ways.

Harder taught in the area of practical theology and directed field education, matching students and congregations for internships. A course Harder taught on urban evangelism provided the impetus for "Partly Dave," a coffee house in downtown Elkhart. Coordinated with congregations in Elkhart, the coffee house provided a safe place for young people to gather and often was a venue for draft counseling during the Vietnam War.

From 1967 to 1969, Harder was one of a committee of seven Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary faculty members, called the Dean's Seminar, that studied what form of leadership and ministry fits Mennonite congregations and how AMBS could fulfill its mission to prepare pastors. That study resulted in a model for theological education that guided the seminary for the next several decades.

Two areas of significant scholarly research serve as a lasting legacy of Harder's work. One is the sociological research of church members, conducted by Harder and J. Howard Kauffman in the 1970s. Harder and Kauffman reported their findings in the book *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later: A Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations* (Herald Press, 1975). A second study, conducted in 1989 by Kauffman and Leo Driedger as an update, provided material for Harder's book *Doors to Lock and Doors to Open: The Discerning People of God* (Herald Press, 1993). This volume interpreted the research in ways that would help congregational members enter more fully into decision-making in the church. The other area of Harder's scholarly work is the book *Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, (Herald Press, 1985), the fourth volume in the Classics of the Radical Reformation series coordinated by IMS.

Harder was born July 1, 1926, in Hillsboro, Kan., to Menno and Katherine Wiens Harder. He completed high school in Hillsboro, served in the Navy and then earned a bachelor's degree at Bethel College, North Newton, in 1948. In 1950, he earned a master's degree in sociology from Michigan State University. Soon after that he enrolled at Bethany Theological Seminary, then in Chicago. He married Bertha Fast, a student at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Chicago, in 1951.

From 1952 to 1957, Harder was pastor of First Mennonite Church in Chicago, and from this experience grew his passion for the inner-city church. In 1958, with two young sons, the Harders moved to Elkhart to join the faculty of MBS. Harder earned a Ph.D. from Northwestern University in 1962. Sabbatical experiences took them to Dublin, Ireland, and Richmond, Va., and during a 1978-1981 leave from AMBS he was pastor of St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship.

In 1983, both Leland and Bertha retired from teaching at AMBS and moved to North Newton. For a brief time, Harder served as director of the Great Plains Seminary Education Program, a forerunner of the AMBS–Great Plains extension.—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

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# Ethiopian church receives JoinHands grant

## Mennonite Men grants Lancaster, Pa., congregation $40,000 for new facility.

Ken Martin (right), a Mennonite Men board member from Leola, Pa., presents a check for $40,000 to Pastor Berhanu Kebede.

Tinsae Kristos Evangelical Church in Lancaster, Pa., is the most recent congregation to receive a grant from JoinHands, the service component of Mennonite Men. Tinsae is a congregation of Ethiopian people located in the Manor District of Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

Ken Martin, a Mennonite Men board member from Leola, Pa., presented a check for $40,000 to Pastor Berhanu Kebede during the worship service at Tinsae Kristos on March 17.

The Tinsae Kristos congregation was organized in 1999. For a number of years, the congregation rented the meetinghouse at Eastern Mennonite Missions for Sunday worship services and used another church facility for choir practices and office space.

On Oct. 8, 2006, the congregation voted unanimously to purchase the former Bethel Mennonite Church building (Eastern District Conference), located in a suburban area of Lancaster. Early in 2007, the group moved into its new facility. Sam Thomas, a Lancaster Mennonite Conference bishop, provides oversight for the congregation and was present for the grant presentation.

Mennonite Men is a constituent group of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Two JoinHands grants are given each year from money donated by interested people across the Unites States and Canada.—*Don Yoder of Mennonite Men*

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# Two Mennonite leaders attend pope's inauguration

## Mennonite World Conference's García wants dialogue with Catholic Church.

After the March 13 election of Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as Pope Francis, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) issued a letter of congratulations and sent two of its leaders to inaugural services in Rome March 19-20 (see also page 9).

In a March 14 letter to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU), César García, MWC general secretary, wrote, "Without a doubt the ministry of Francis as the first Latin American—and the first Jesuit—pope will bring new impetus to our relationships."

García expressed his belief that the history of MWC dialogues with the Catholic Church "will create important spaces for our churches under the pontificate of Pope Francis." García referred to the 1998-2003 Mennonite-Catholic dialogue that led to the joint report "Called to Be Peacemakers." He also referred to the more recent trilateral dialogue on baptism—involving Catholics, Mennonites and Lutherans—begun in December 2012.

"Please be assured of our love and prayers for your church in these days of momentous transition," wrote García. He added, "Sharing in the same Latin American background, I was especially touched by Francis' attitude when he bowed to the crowd after asking prayer from the many people that had come to receive him … his attitude of humility has been a special blessing for me as a Latin American." Attending the inaugural services in Rome, at the invitation of the PCPCU, were Rainer Burkart of Germany and Henk Stenvers of the Netherlands. Burkhart is a member of the MWC Faith and Life Commission, and Stenvers of the Deacons Commission. They had an opportunity to meet representatives of other Christian world communions and also greet the pope personally.

"Pope Francis seems to be a very friendly and humble person," they wrote. "It was our impression that he will take steps to let the papal office appear in a different way." They noted several important "small signs." For example, "the chair of the pope during the audience [with ecumenical guests] was not standing on a podium but at the same level with everybody else. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, representing the Eastern Orthodox world, was given the exact same kind of chair as that of the pope."
—*Mennonite World Conference staff*

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# Disagreements are inevitable, divisions are optional

## Harvey Yoder: Are we overlooking what the Bible teaches about unity?

*Paul: I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

*By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. … Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.*

*Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.*

*Jesus: My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

When I became a licensed pastor in Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1965, there were four different Anabaptist-related communions in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham (Va.) County area, three of these being Old Order groups at variance with each other. The main Virginia Conference congregation I joined at that time had experienced only one division since its beginning 130 years earlier, the Old Order one in 1900.

Today there are 12 different Mennonite subgroups in Rockingham County alone, and there are signs of even more church divorces to come.

As a committed Anabaptist-Mennonite and as teacher of James Madison University's Lifelong Learning Class on "Mennonites in the Valley" for the past 15 years, I find this multiplicity of divisions beyond embarrassing. We are, after all, supposed to be a church that's all about community, peace and getting along with each other.

In the past, our church splits were often accompanied by rancorous debates and hard feelings. But those days are largely behind us as we become ever more skilled at conflict evasion and less inclined to do conflict engagement. We tend to "divorce" amicably and continue to get along just fine, making every effort to remain nice to each other in a way that makes "no-fault" dividing seem OK.

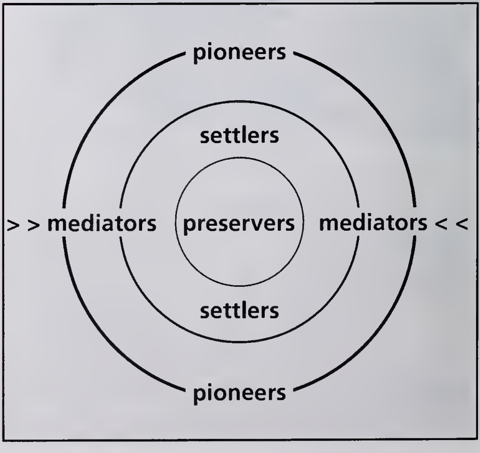
What we lose as we politely agree to disagree and go our separate ways, however, are the kinds of church family connections that enhance learning and create a sense of needed accountability with each other. More homogeneous but separated groups tend not to experience the kind of healthy growth and maturity they might if they did the hard work of respectfully listening to each other and continuing to try to work things out.

Whether as citizens of a nation or members of organizations or congregations, we tend to feel uneasy about people with opposing opinions and may even see them as dangerous.

But why not see having a diversity of perspectives, in the context of a unity of purpose, as a potential blessing?

I grew up in an Amish family and community that placed a high value on unity and uniformity. In spite of this (or perhaps because of this) we frequently had people leaving our congregation to join another or leave another church to join ours. The assumption was that if you couldn't agree to get along or go along, you pulled up stakes and went elsewhere—or started a new group of your own.

Years ago I heard Mennonite missionary and church planter Donald Jacobs present a version of the diagram below in a seminar on church growth he led at Eastern Mennonite University (then EMC).



Here are the main players in Jacobs' model

**Preservers:** He stressed that all groups, including churches, need a stable group of members committed to preserving its core values. Around some issues, he said, any of us may find ourselves resisting change and working to preserve the "old order" of things. When these conservative-minded folks begin to feel their concerns are no longer heard or respected, they may feel strongly enough to leave as a group to form their own separate community.

**Pioneers**: Healthy groups also need innovators who advocate for change, lest a group become ingrown and stagnant. These folks tend to operate on the outer fringe of the community and are often viewed with suspicion and fear. When these innovators no longer feel heard or respected, they may likewise form another group or simply drift off one by one.

In either case, when new groups form, they form alignments similar to the groups they have left, except now some of the more liberal pioneers may find themselves labeled as conservative preservers in the context of the new group.

**Settlers**: These folks are the more or less silent majority in the group in a given conflict and are not as strongly aligned with either the pioneers or preservers on a particular issue but may have varying degrees of sympathy for one or the other—or both.

Jacobs stressed that in a healthy group, individuals are able to change roles, depending on the issue. Let me speak personally. On some issues, such as advocating for more house churches instead of investing in ever more church real estate, I may be seen as a pioneer, whereas on other issues, such as preserving our Mennonite peace stance, I may be seen as a strong preserver. On certain other issues, as in what style of church music to use, I'm often in the middle, open to those of either camp. In the case of these examples, in some settings or in some periods of history, house churches will be seen as a decidedly conservative idea, whereas the advocacy of nonviolence will be seen as a very radical one. Depending on the issue and on the makeup of the group, we will find ourselves at different places—and therefore aligned with different people—which is as it should be. This kind of dynamic reshuffling has the effect of bonding us to a variety of different people and tends to have an interlacing quality that makes a group stronger and more division proof.

We tend to 'divorce' amicably and continue to get along just fine, making every effort to remain nice to each other in a way that makes 'no-fault' dividing seem OK.

**Mediators**: Each of us, Jacobs reminded us, needs to serve in intermediary roles within the group whenever possible. Sometimes we may serve in the role of interpreter for the preservers, promoting good conversation between them and the pioneers and between them and the rank-and-file middle. At other times we may advocate for the innovators, to help make sure they are clearly understood and their ideas are being respectfully considered.

When we see differences as normal—as actually having potential for making our churches healthier and stronger—and when each member, and each congregation, feels valued and needed as a part of the larger body, the health and growth of the church is enhanced.

My modest proposal for us Mennonites is that we agree to an indefinite moratorium on breaking up by adopting the following:

In light of Jesus' and the apostle's teachings on church unity, we are committed to steadfastly maintaining a strong "unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace" as we seek to grow toward an ever greater "unity of the faith" until separated by death. We will practice redemptive forms of discipline for erring individuals, but we will never again separate as whole church families from one another.—*Harvey Yoder, a licensed professional counselor at the Family Life Resource Center in Harrisonburg, Va., and pastor of Family of Hope, a house church in the Virginia Mennonite Conference*

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***On My Way: The View from the Ninth Decade***, Daniel Hertzler, who, pausing in his 80s to ask what was important after all these years, observed that he was still writing checks and getting along reasonably well. His pithy memoir will be released August 2013. 102p $12.95

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## CALENDAR

May 21-24, 2013. **St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, quilt show**. Door receipts, boutique sales, and overnight accommodation – all for MCC Relief. Part of Quilt & Fibre Art Festival, Waterloo Region – see www.stjacobs.com. For B&B contact dejohns@rogers.com or 519-664-3049.

***Geez* magazine launches contest for *'30 More Sermons You'd Never Hear in Church,'*** Winnipeg, Manitoba. The social gospel is on an upswing, and the crowd-moving sermon deserves another chance. "We want to hear from those who wouldn't normally fill the pulpit on a Sunday morning," says *Geez* publisher Aiden Enns. "If the social gospel is going to be preached today, it will come from the margins, and it won't sound like the Sunday mornings we're used to." The top sermon will receive $500, with $300 and $200 going to the second and third place winners. The winners, plus a selection of other entries, will be published in the Winter 2013 issue of *Geez*. Deadline for entries is Sept. 1, 2013. Word limit is 750. Enter at contest@geezmagazine.org. See www.geezmagazine.org/contest for full details and entry form. *Geez* is an ad-free quarterly magazine of spirit and social action.

## WORKERS

**Angustia, Moises**, was ordained as pastor of Iglesia Unida de Avivamiento, Brooklyn, N.Y., on March 17.

**Brubaker, Regina**, was licensed as pastor of faith development for children and families at Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on March 17.

**Hollowell, Hugh**, was ordained at Raleigh Mennonite Church, Raleigh, N.C., for his ministry with the homeless as director of Love Wins Ministries in Raleigh, N.C., on March 24.

**Horst, Stephen,** and **Bethany Tobin** were licensed for overseas mission work at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Sunday, March 24. Steve and Bethany will be serving in Bangkok, Thailand, appointed by Virginia Mennonite Missions and as associate missionaries with Eastern Mennonite Missions.

## OBITUARIES

**Albrecht, Wilbur L.**, 92, Tiskilwa, Ill., died Dec. 31, 2012, of pneumonia. Spouse: Gratice L. Eichelberger Albrecht. Parents: John V. and Leah Litwiller Albrecht. Children: Curtis, Carson; five grandchildren; one step-grandchild; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 12 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa.

**Basinger, Lola May Schertz**, 96, Bluffton, Ohio, died March 3. Spouse: L. Eugene Basinger (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Matilda Stalter Schertz. Children: Doug, Jerome, Debra Stechschulte; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 8 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Bertsche, James E.**, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 27. Spouse: Genevieve "Jenny" Shuppert Bertsche. Parents: Harry and Emma Steiner Bertsche. Children: Linda Bertsche Yoder, Sandra King, Tim; seven grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Blum, Carolyn M. Case**, 74, Harleysville, Pa., died on March 3. Parents: Earl and Kathryn Merz Case. Children: Cynthia Fertsch, Kathleen Heavener, Bob Blum, Jr., Diane Blum, Kimberly Kennedy-Garrison, Jonathan, Timothy, Jennifer Hosterman, Matthew, Joshua, Benjamin, Denise Blum; 25 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 7 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

**Brouse, Barbara Joan Kuebler**, 80, Llewlyn, Pa., died March 26. Parents: Maxwell E. and Grace E. Kuebler. Children: Jane Brouse, Frank Brouse, Jenefer Christine Brouse-Schmidt, Daniel Weiland Brouse; seven grandchildren. Funeral: April 13 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

**Buckwalter, Miriam E. Bair**, 85, Lititz, Pa., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Leon H. Buckwalter (deceased). Parents: H. Landis and Elizabeth Mellinger Bair. Children: L. Herbert, Frederic N., Dana B. Carson, Lori L. Klassen; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 19 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

**Burkey, Erma Yeackley**, 95, Milford, Neb., died March 10. Spouse: Floyd Burkey (deceased). Parents: John and Sarah Stutzman Yeackley. Children: Janet Sommerfeld, Paulene Anderson, Kathy Wiens, John; 18 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren. Foster children: Newt Zimmerman, Mark Floyd, Rick Shilhan, Terry Jantze. Funeral: March 13 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

**Cressman, Mervin**, 73, West Montrose, Ontario, died March 6. Spouse: Diane Douglas Cressman. Parents: Daniel and Magdalena Martin Cressman. Child: Daryl; one grandchild. Funeral: March 12 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Diller, J. Robert**, 92, Hesston, Kan., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Marcella Ruth Bare Diller. Parents: Joseph R. and Grace Darling Cooprider Diller. Children: Mel, Marlin, Deann Diller, Rod, Darlene Buller; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 1 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Dyck, Elva Mae Hershberger**, 88, Hesston, Kan., died April 7. Spouse: Harold P. Dyck (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Amy Erb Hershberger. Children: Gary, Thomas, Jocelyn Dyck Cooley, Julia Roupp; 11 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 13 at Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, Hesston.

**Grieser, Elvesta Christner**, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died March 11. Spouse: Lloyd Grieser (deceased). Parents: William and Mary Hershberger Christner. Children: Colette Yoder-Overly, Ron; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 15 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Hunsberger, Alverna Yothers**, 86, Bedminster Township, Pa., died Feb. 17. Spouse: Daniel L. Hunsberger. Parents: Erwin and Nora Elizabeth Rush Yothers. Children: John, Jerold "Jerry," Jay, Janet Landis, Jolene Schlosser, Joy Danelle Hunsberger; 16 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 23 at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasie, Pa.

**Kauffman, Tasha Lynn**, 38, Lancaster, Pa., died Dec. 9, 2012. Parents: Glenn M. and Mary Schrag Kauffman. Sibling: Keri L. Kauffman. Tasha was an analyst in the Electronic Records Department at Lancaster General Hospital; a member of Mountville Mennonite Church where she was the worship leader; and a 1997 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University. Funeral: Dec. 15 at Mountville Mennonite Church, Mountville, Pa.

**Kinsinger, Dale Lawrence**, 82, Grantsville, Md., died April 12. Spouse: Audrey Marie Schaefer Kinsinger. Parents: Roy L. and Margaret Lawrence Kinsinger. Child: Timothy. Funeral: April 15 at Springs Mennonite Church, Springs, Pa.

**Kreider, Kay Sutter**, died March 17, in Seattle, Wash., after a brief illness with lung cancer. She is survived by her husband Paul Kreider, daughter Kara Kreider and partner Nick Demopoulos of Brooklyn, N.Y., daughter Alyssa Kreider and husband William Sunderland and grandsons Yuri and Gareth of Seattle, and foster son John Hammond (sons Jonathan and Derek) of Chatsworth, Ga.; also survived by her mother, Merna Sutter of Flanagan, Ill., siblings Don Sutter of Pontiac, Ill., Tom Sutter (Deb, and Aaron & Sarah) of Urbana, Ill., and, Jane Sutter and Mary Sutter of Sedona, Ariz. A private memorial gathering for the family with the Dayton Mennonite Fellowship is being planned in the Dayton, Ohio, area for July, 2013.

**Landis, Grace W. Delp**, 87, Towamencin Township, Pa., died April 2. Spouse: Abram A. Landis. Parents: Ephraim and Grace H. Wismer Delp. Children: Barbara L. Miller, Tim D., Philip D.; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

**Leatherman, Dorothy Rice**, 85, Sellersville, Pa., died March 8. Spouse: Wilson D. Leatherman. Parents: Edward and Pearl Sames Rice. Children: Pearl Shelly, Darlene Yoder, Debra Seuren, Clifford, Steven; nine grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 13 at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasie, Pa.

**Lehman, Mercie D. Conrad**, 87, Louisville, Ohio, died March 1. Spouse: Willis Lehman. Parents: Orie and Goldie Byler Conrad. Children: Diane Preusser, Connie Fenstermaker, Darrel Miller, Doug Miller; two grandchildren and step-grandchildren; many step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 5 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

**Livengood, Guy W.**, 90, Springs, Pa., died March 16. Spouse: Harriet Louise Otto Livengood (deceased). Spouse: Florence Irene Eash Thomas Bough Livengood. Parents: Fay O. and Ressie Rembold Livengood. Children: Donna Booton, Noel, Ann Critchfield; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 20 at Springs Mennonite Church.

**Martin, Magdalena**, 95, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died March 18. Parents: Simeon and Barbara Snyder Martin. Funeral: March 21 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

**Peachey, David S.**, 74, Belleville, Pa., died March 27, of a heart attack. Spouse: Beverly G. Kauffman Peachey. Parents: John E. and Katie Spicher Peachey. Children: David L., Donald J., Debbie; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 2 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

**Preheim, Hazel Hilda Kaufman**, 89, Marion, S.D., died March 11. Spouse: Henry Preheim, Jr. (deceased). Parents: David D. and Hulda Graber Kaufman. Children: Jerilyn Wuertz, Connie Tschetter, Jim; 10 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: March 16 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

**Rice, Mary Alderfer**, 90, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 24. Spouse: Owen Rice (deceased). Parents: Henry and Aquilla Miller Alderfer. Children: Lorraine Stutzman, Mary Ann Kulp, Marilyn Landis, Charlotte Myers, Ruth Swartley, Barbara Hackman, Donna Godshall, Susan Hange, David; 26 grandchildren; 53 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 2 at Deep Run Mennonite East, Perkasie, Pa.

**Sauder, Luella Mae Holst**, 84, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died March 21, of cancer. Spouse: Wesley Sauder. Parents: Jacob and Catherine Annie Holtzworth Holst. Children: Sharon Wideman, Margaret Eby, Stewart, Arnold; nine grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 26 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

**Shetler, Alice B. Crecraft**, 91, Scottdale, Pa., died March 16. Spouse: Maynard W. Shetler (deceased). Parents: Clyde Wesley and Jenny Louise Lunn Crecraft. Child: Larry R., two grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Scottdale Mennonite Church.

**Schrock, Dale D.**, 83, Archbold, Ohio, died March 23. Spouse: Florence Stoltzfus Schrock (deceased). Parents: Cletus and Phoebe Stuckey Schrock. Children: Marlyn, Dallas, Joy; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 27 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**Swartzentruber, Mary M.**, 81, Springs, Pa., died March 15. Parents: Jacob B. and Fannie Kinsinger Swartzentruber. Funeral: March 17 at Springs Mennonite Church.

**Thomas, Jean Miller**, 87, Lititz, Pa., died April 7. Spouse: Leon M. Thomas (deceased). Parents: Thomas and Ruth Brenneman Miller. Children: Warren, Everett, Nadine Thomas, Lowell, Greta Edgell, Gretchen Thomas; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 13 at Landis Homes.

**Troyer, Josephine "Jo" Huser**, 86, Goshen, Ind., died March 22. Spouse: Robert Hartzler (deceased). Parents: Henry and Verena Schwartz Huser. Children: Rebecca Christophel, Verena "Kay" Schrock, Mary Hoefer, Mark; 11 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; several step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 26 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Unzicker, Elaine S.**, 73, Goshen, Ind., died March 3. Spouse: Harold Kauffman. Spouse: Roger Unzicker (deceased). Children: Eric, Thomas, David, Jeffrey; five grandchildren. Funeral: March 10 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Wehner, Carl O.**, 83, Cedar Falls, Iowa, died March 1. Spouse: Wanda Lee Ponder Wehner (deceased). Parents: Orville L. and Doris L. Derks Wehner. Children: Sherilyn Dekarske, Susan Wehner Munderloh, Linda VanVlack; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 5 at First United Methodist Church, Cedar Falls.

**Wehner, Wanda Lee Ponder**, 83, Cedar Falls, Iowa, died March 1. Spouse: Carl O. Wehner (deceased). Parents: William Joseph and Bernice Meredith Ponder. Children: Sherilyn Dekarske, Susan Wehner Munderloh, Linda VanVlack; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 5 at First United Methodist Church, Cedar Falls.

**Wiebe, Abram G.**, 94, Altona, Man., died March 5. Spouse: Tina Wiebe. Parents: John H. Wiebe and Maria Ginter (deceased). Survivors: children Myrna, Wesley and Elbert; also four grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Altona, Man.

**Yoder, Hazel Marie Smucker**, 100, Goshen, Ind., died April 3. Spouse: Paton Yoder (deceased). Parents: Jesse E. and Emma Zook Smucker. Children: Devin, James, Susan Stempel, Ken, Kathy Martin; 13 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 6 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Yoder, Leona Ferne Brenneman**, 87, Kalona, Iowa, died March 1. Spouse: L. David Yoder. Parents: Irwin B. and Mattie Miller Brenneman. Child: Leon; one granddaughter. Funeral: March 6 at Pleasantview Home, Kalona.

**Zehr, Clarence Daniel**, 91, Fisher, Ill., died April 9. Spouse: Evelyn Marie Eichelberger Zehr. Parents: Daniel P. and Mollie Birkey Zehr. Children: Stan, Pam Seim; three grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 12 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher.

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**Eastern Mennonite Seminary Lancaster** is seeking applicants for a part-time ***administrative assistant***. The administrative assistant provides a range of support services for various programs of the EMS extension program in southeastern Pennsylvania. This role ensures that communication, academic record keeping and financial operations function smoothly for the EMS Lancaster programs. Bachelor's degree preferred. Expertise with personal computers, word processing, spreadsheet, data processing and desktop publishing required. Administrative assistant must possess strong communication skills, ability to organize and maintain systems of information, and ability to plan and organize work with minimal direction. Submit application, resume and three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. People who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

**Eastern Mennonite University** is seeking qualified applicants for a ***program administrator*** position with the Washington Community Scholars' Center in Washington, D.C. Responsibilities include daily administrative details of WCSC, assisting with recruitment, internship placement, event planning, managing databases and enrolling students in outside university classes. Bachelor's degree preferred. Position is .75 FTE. Review of applications will begin immediately. Submit application, resume and contact information for three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources. EOE.

**Virginia Mennonite Conference** invites applications for the ***full-time position of conference minister***. Applicants are expected to have significant theological training and leadership experience as well as administrative and interpersonal skills. Salary and benefits will be consistent with the MC USA guidelines. To view the full job description and access the application form, please go to: www.virginiaconference.org/jobopenings

**Blooming Glen Mennonite Church**, a vibrant multistaff congregation in Blooming Glen Pa., is seeking a ***full-time youth pastor***. He or she will work with volunteer youth leaders to "invite every youth to commit to a personal relationship and lifelong journey with Jesus Christ, mentoring them toward wholeness within a supportive church family and empowering them to be disciples in the local and global community." Information can be obtained by emailing the search committee at bloomingglenyouth@gmail.com.

**North Danvers Mennonite Church** of rural Danvers, Ill., is seeking a ***full-time pastor***. A member of the Central District Conference, we have a Sunday morning all-ages attendance of about 80 and value discipleship, worship, service and fellowship. Would prefer a candidate with experience, seminary training, Anabaptist values and strong preaching and communication skills but will consider all applicants. Church website: Northdanverschurch .com. Search committee contact: marvelcraig@yahoo.com.

**Bethel College** seeks an ***associate director of development***. Responsibilities include identification, cultivation and solicitation of donor prospects and work with the college's annual and capital funds. Qualifications: interpersonal, public presentation, organizational and technology skills; self-direction; willingness and ability to travel; familiarity with Bethel constituency; advocacy for Bethel; understanding of the values of the Mennonite faith; experience in or closely related to development; bachelor's degree required. Submit resume, cover letter and three professional references to Sondra Koontz, Vice President for Advancement, Bethel College, 300 E. 27th, North Newton, KS 67117, or email skoontz@bethelks.edu. Review of applications begins immediately and will be accepted until the position is filled.

**Crooked Creek Christian Camp**, located near Washington, Iowa, is seeking a ***full-time camp administrator***. Crooked Creek is situated on 300 acres of beautiful Iowa landscape. We are looking for someone who has a strong sense of calling for camp ministry and a personal commitment to Christ with an Anabaptist theology. Additional qualities desired are strong administrative skills with emphasis in financial management, fundraising, public relations, staff oversight and a heart for hospitality. For further information or to submit a resume please contact the search committee at cccc.search@gmail.com.

Jubilee celebration: **First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana**, Ill., is planning a ***50th-anniversary reunion weekend*** on July 26-28, 2013. All former attendees are warmly invited to return for a weekend of fellowship, worship, service and music. Check out information on www.fmc-cu.org/ or call the church at 217-367-5353.

**Hinkletown Mennonite School** is seeking applicants for the following positions: ***full-time facilities manager/custodian***, ***full-time and part-time computer/technology support*** and ***middle school teachers*** in science, social studies, Spanish. Send resume to Dawn Landes, Administrator, at dlandes@hmsk8.org. Visit hmsk8.org for more information.

**Is there a Mennonite spirituality?** Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

***Johann***, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

## RESOURCES

**Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook**, edited by James R. Krabill, Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris and Brian Schrag (William Carey Library Publishers, 2013, $44.99), offers theological reflection, case studies, practical tools and audiovisual resources to help the global church appreciate and generate culturally appropriate arts in worship and witness.

**Creating Local Arts Together** by James R. Krabill and Brian Schrag (William Carey Library Publishers, 2013, $34.99) is a manual designed to guide an individual or group into a local community's efforts at integrating its arts with the values and purposes of God's kingdom. The practical, playful text reduces experience-based scholarly insights gained from multiple decades of incarnational ministry around the world into a flexible seven-step process.

**Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships** by James V. Brownson (Eerdmans, 2013, $29) argues that Christians should reconsider whether or not the biblical strictures against same-sex relations as defined in the ancient world should apply to contemporary, committed same-sex relationships. Brownson analyzes each of the seven main texts that appear to address intimate same-sex relations.

**Dissident for Life: Alexander Ogorodnikov and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in Russia** by Koenraad De Wolf (Eerdmans, 2013, $28) tells the story of Alexander Ogorodnikov, longtime Russian dissident, whose courage touched people from every walk of life, including famous world leaders such as Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

**Fully Awake and Truly Alive: Spiritual Practices to Nurture Your Soul** by Jane E. Vennard (SkyLight Paths, 2013, $16.99) illustrates the joys and frustrations of spiritual practice, offers insights from various religious traditions and provides step-by-step exercises and meditations to practice community, hospitality, service and living gratefully.

**Men Pray: Voices of Strength, Faith, Healing, Hope and Courage**, edited by editors at SkyLight Paths (SkyLight Paths, 2013, $16.99), celebrates the variety of ways men around the world have called out to the Divine—with words of joy, praise, gratitude, wonder, petition and even anger—from the ancient world up to our day.

**Equipping the New African Peacebuilder** by Titus K. Oyeyemi (Evangel Press, 2012, $25) lays out plans for peace not only in Nigeria but all of Africa and presents a multifaceted curriculum for peace education.

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# Why don't young adults go to church?

**Peter Epp** teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba.

A discussion among us 30-something Mennonites has been heating up online. It's a discussion that cuts to the heart of nearly everything the church worries about us. The discussion question is the first one you'd guess: Why don't we go to church?

The discussion, to my knowledge, kicked off when *Mennonite World Review* reposted an entry from a blog entitled "Motley Mama" on its website. In it, Katie Baer, a fellow millennial, responds to a question from one of her readers. The reader asks Katie, an articulate, creative Mennonite writer, why she doesn't go to church.

The question is posed as it often is these days. It's asked carefully, as if the asker is anxious that the wrong words may chase us even farther away. And it ends by indicating an almost-total devotion to making church work for young Mennonites: "Is there anything the rest of us can do to welcome [you] back?"

> I see a generation saying seriously important things but without doing enough to deserve to be taken seriously.

**Katie's response to this question** is deeply honest. It also reflects some of my feelings, and those of many of my peers as well. She begins by admitting that church can feel boring and that it's easier to stay home, eat blueberry pancakes and stream online TV shows instead.

She also goes on to specify what she feels we want: "We want a church less about church and more about community. We want a church with reached-out hands instead of clenched fists. We want real. We want relatable. We want compassionate and inclusive. We want to talk about things that matter now."

I'm glad Katie was so honest. But her honesty, by itself, reflects an aspect of my generation that I've grown increasingly nervous about.

Our generation tends to be great with honest reflections. We were brought up to tell the truth and find our voices. Our love of blogging is a testament to that.

Unfortunately, though, we haven't always been so great at allowing our honesty to be evaluated. We haven't been great at this because we haven't been sticking around to receive it. We casually inject our honesty from the outside and then move on. So even if we're right, we're not committed or vulnerable enough to be a part of actually making those concerns mean anything.

Right now, if I assess my generation's honesty, I see this: a lot of sincere, valid, prophetic insight. But I also see a generation asking the church to bend over backward for them while lightheartedly hinting that they might still prefer to relax at home every Sunday even if the church does bend over backward. I see a generation saying seriously important things but without doing enough to deserve to be taken seriously.

**Yet we are taken seriously.** Our parents, our parents' friends, our grandparents, our grandparents' friends and so many Mennonites over the age of 40 have listened anyway. They've nodded, chosen their words ever more carefully and time and time again asked us if there was anything, anything at all, they could ever do to keep us. More and more, they've acted like people who know that the future of their church depends on us. They've acted like people willing to consider just about anything just to keep us.

I'm not saying the church hasn't been frustratingly rigid sometimes. I'm just saying that much of that church is asking us to help them overcome that. They're no longer asking us to be just like them. They're no longer asking us to give up our ideals and our concerns. They're no longer asking us to sit quietly in the pews in our Sunday best, pretending. They're just asking us to come out and help them fix the problems we've told them about.

Lately, when I've been asked why I still go to church, my first answer tends to be this: Where else would I be required to build community with people I otherwise (and usually inaccurately) label too conservative, too sheltered, too naïve or too closed-minded? Where else would I be required to coexist with and learn from my elders? Where else would I learn the humility that my elders model every time they listen to me?

There may be a lot I want from church that I'm not getting yet. But, thankfully, it's still providing even more of what I actually need. And the more we all choose what we need, the closer we all get to the inspiring, thriving church we want.

## DVD REVIEW

**A Late Quartet** (R) delves into the relationships among members of a classical string quartet that has had 25 years of success when the cellist and oldest member decides he must retire when he learns he has Parkinson's Disease. This leads the others into conflicts about their music and relationships. The film's narrative brilliantly follows the structure and emotional tone of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 14, opus 131, a piece played nonstop no matter how life interferes.—*Gordon Houser*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Believeing in the Resurrection: The Meaning and Promise of the Risen Jesus** by Gerald O'Collins (Paulist Press, 2012, $24.95) surveys current writings and debates in the area of resurrection studies. He writes: "There is a haunting, ancient simplicity in the Easter stories that speaks for their credibility." He concludes by looking at the moral implications of the resurrection and asks, "If the resurrection truly happened, how should that affect and change our lives?"—*gh*

**The Ethical Vision of Clint Eastwood** by Sara Anson Vaux (Eerdmans, 2012, $24) analyzes 15 of Eastwood's best-known films from narrative, artistic and thematic perspectives and focuses on his unfolding moral agenda. She also considers the complexities of his major movies.—*gh*

## TV REVIEW

**The Bible**, a 10-hour television miniseries broadcast weekly in March on the History Channel, garnered a surprisingly large viewing audience (the first episode was seen by 13.1 million viewers). The series covers the entire Bible in five two-hour parts, using live action and computer-generated imagery. While it helps viewers get a sense of the historical reality of some stories, its literalistic interpretation sends a disturbing message about a violent God. And its depiction of a Satan figure with dark skin has racist implications.—*gh*

# A possible spiritual classic

Christian Wiman, a well-known poet and until recently the editor of *Poetry* magazine, has written what may become a spiritual classic.

He opens his book *My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013) with a four-line stanza from one of his uncompleted poems:

*My God my bright abyss*
*into which all my longing will not go*
*once more I come to the edge of all I know*
*and believing nothing believe in this:*

He closes the book with the same four lines, with one exception: the colon after "this" becomes a period.

Thus he captures the paradoxical journey of faith he is on, at "the edge of all I know," looking forward. Then, at the end, "believing nothing believe in this," a sure but tentative faith.

In a preface, Wiman says he "wanted to write a book that might help someone who is at once as confused and certain about the source of life and consciousness as I am."

Wiman's language about faith is refreshing because it does not employ the usual insider phrases. He often contrasts faith and belief, noting that "faith in God is, in the deepest sense, faith in life—which means that even the staunchest life of faith is a life of great change."

Belief, on the other hand, is more intellectual and superficial. "How astonishing it is," he writes, "the fierceness with which we cling to beliefs that have made us miserable, or beliefs that prove to be so obviously inadequate when extreme suffering—or great joy—comes."

Another theme under the rubric of paradox is the commingling of God's presence and absence. Wiman writes: "If grace woke me to God's presence in the world and in my heart, it also woke me to his absence. I never truly felt the pain of unbelief until I began to believe."

In 2005, Wiman learned that he had an incurable cancer of the blood, which he calls "as rare as it is unpredictable, 'smoldering' in some people for decades, turning others to quick tender." He wrote this book in sections over a period of years. Some parts are written during the early stages of cancer treatment, when he faced a more immediate chance of dying. He describes this with incisive feeling: "It is qualitatively different when death leans over to sniff you, when massive unmetaphorical pain goes crawling through your bones, when fear ... ices your spine."

One of Wiman's recurring themes is the affinity of poetry and faith. He points to the importance of imagination in experiencing God: "Human imagination is not simply our means of reaching out to God but God's means of manifesting himself to us."

He says he is a Christian because of Jesus' cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Christ's suffering, he writes, "shatters the iron walls around individual human suffering," and "Christ's compassion makes extreme human compassion—to the point of death, even—possible." And he is a Christian, he writes, "because I can feel God only through physical existence, can feel his love only in the love of other people."

Wiman writes of his experiences of this love through his wife and his twin daughters, who have helped carry him through seven years of cancer.

In the end, he concludes that at the heart of faith is "acceptance of all the gifts that God, even in the midst of death, grants us."

*My Bright Abyss* demands but also rewards careful reading and reflecting. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

*(Continued from page 5)*

Balthasar Hubmaier "anarchists" using Linthicum's first dictionary definition (a state of disorder due to absence or nonrecognition of authority) to describe how those first radical reformers thought about the authority of "the church" of their time.—*Jim Compton-Schmidt, Reedley, Calif*

### This makes agreement harder

I appreciated J. Denny Weaver's reflections on our uses of the Bible. As he indicates, we all look at biblical texts through our own filters. These filters include childhood experiences in church, models provided by our parents, courses taken in college and views of those whom we respect. As he mentions, certain biblical practices we now reject out of hand (stoning, slavery, polygamy and others). Recognizing that we do this as a matter of practice should give us pause when we then turn around and attempt to use it as a rule book when disagreeing with other believers.

On the one hand, this is a liberating concept. The Bible is no longer a set of rules for all times and places unrelated to a given historical context. On the other hand, this makes our job harder, since we need to work on finding meaning and guidance from Scripture for our time and place in history. I suspect Weaver would find a role for people sharing their views, disagreeing and perhaps even coming to consensus in the setting of a community of believers.—*David Schmidt, Great Bend, Kan.*

### Use of 'welcoming' is bias

*The Mennonite* appears to have adopted by headline the term "welcoming" as a term of art for those advocating acceptance of same-sex coupling (March). I question this. All congregations should be welcoming. Discussion can be shaped as much by co-opting terms as by formal resolutions. To use the term narrowly reflects favorable bias.

Our congregation wants to be welcoming of all, including those of homosexual orientation. However, we recently went in a slightly different direction by removing the name of San Diego (Calif.) Mennonite Church from the list of Supportive Communities maintained by the Brethren Mennonite Council. We tried to do so in a manner that was not dismissive or hostile. Although motives in our small fellowship may have differed, the consensus was that we do not support same-sex marriage or that this is a legal inevitability and that we do not want warmth toward gay brothers and sisters to overwhelm a Christian agenda of many dimensions.—*Bruce Leichty, secretary of San Diego Mennonite Church*

### Rebuke of Murray is funny

Ron Adams' and Isaac Villegas' rebuke of Stuart Murray's assumptions about post-Christendom (February) is a little bit funny, even if the issues are indeed serious. Funny because one way of reading the rebuke is this: The Anabaptists and we, their offshoots, have rejected the Christendom model throughout our history. But now, at the turn of the 21st century, we suddenly find ourselves culturally and theologically accepted. The media loves us, and theologians the world over take John Howard Yoder seriously. If the world will just hang onto the idea of Christians dominating society, it looks like we'll get a chance to "speak truth to power." And if we take that chance, well, at last, some of that power will be ours.

But here comes Stuart Murray messing up that prospect by rejecting the whole paradigm.

Adams and Villegas seem to be speaking of church one way, Murray another. Murray started with "naked" discipleship—with following Jesus and letting consequences such as cultural influence come as they may. We may surely believe Adams and Villegas also intend to be Jesus' followers, but their starting point—and their path until the very end of their piece—seems nonetheless to be cultivating the cultural influence that Jesus' followers can have and to be sure we don't lose that influence. Not polar opposite from Murray, to be sure, but a mood something more like an advocacy group's, somewhat less excited by Jesus' announcement of God's reign.—*Theron F. Schlabach, Goshen, Ind.*

### Letter misses point

I appreciate Gary Blosser taking the time to respond to my January piece on the Mennonite confession of faith and marriage. However, he seems to have missed my point. Blosser emphasizes the "one man and one woman" in article 19. But I show that the confession itself is emphasizing the "for life" (i.e., it is focusing on saying no to divorce and remarriage).

The confession (and present-day practice in Mennonite churches) points toward a way of emphasizing healing over legalism in relation to divorced and remarried people. Does Blosser believe this is wrong? If so, he should speak out against it. If not, what is the basis then for using the confession as grounds for denying welcome to same-sex couples while welcoming couples in their second marriages?—*Ted Grimsrud, Harrisonburg, Va.*

### Wonderful Easter cover

When I saw the front cover of the April issue, my first glance was in quick passing and I thought, "Oh, [the staff at] *The Mennonite* has outdone themselves, and it is very fitting for the season." It made me want to make sure I looked through the rest of the magazine later. Then at dinner in the evening, I was looking at the cover again, and I immediately thought that it looked like Ken Gingerich's work. I was right. It is eye-catching, beautiful and lifts one's spirit. Thanks, Ken, for creating it. Thanks, [designer Dee Birkey], for selecting it.—*Nancy Kauffmann, denominational minister, Mennonite Church USA*

# God sightings: moments with Father

*This then, is how you should pray: "Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* —Matthew 6:9-10 TNIV

*Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*—John 5:19 TNIV

Jesus taught his disciples to address God as a loving father who gives directions to his children. We, too, are invited to address God in this way and to listen for God's instructions.

One of my growing edges is to listen for God's voice in prayer. As my friend Keith Yoder says, "Listening prayer is one practice that cultivates our ability to hear God. Listening prayer is part of the historic practice of solitude and silence before God. In this kind of prayer one does not make requests or vocalize praise and thanksgiving. Rather one simply quiets the noise within and without and listens."

Because Keith regularly writes a column entitled "Moments with Father," I asked him to tell me about his practice of listening for God. He noted that one "may begin by meditating on a particular Scripture passage and listening for additional thoughts and personal instruction, or we may ponder a question and wait with dependency and expectancy for God to direct our understanding."

Keith acknowledges that what he writes are "impressions received while listening to God in prayer." He tests these impressions with Scripture and the character of God's Son, by which God has already spoken. He finds the Holy Spirit drawing his attention to passages that have the concept, the wording or both that come to him as he listens.

The following sentences are drawn from one of his meditations. They are written as though God were speaking:

*Even as I wait upon you, I would have you wait upon me.*

*You may wait for a person or event. Wait with me for the coming of the Lord Jesus to catch away his church as a bride. You may wait by a person, to stay as a presence, support or advocate. You may wait by a situation, taking a stand, keeping watch, seeking justice.*

*You may wait upon a responsibility, guarding a stewardship to which you have been appointed … at a time … to a place … for a purpose. You may wait upon a person, attending to their interests and needs as a servant like a waiter or waitress. Often such waiting involves patient continuance. Often you wait, gathered together with others in a common purpose and hope.*

*Waiting upon another, as I wait upon you, is to incline toward and accept others—to reach out to be near them, receive them and serve them. Waiting upon another is longing for their presence and strength—to know and be known by them. I long for you to wait upon me.*

In essence, waiting is attentive and engaged. Attentive: with one's eye upon others to know their interests, their needs, their nature. Engaged: ready to act on behalf of others, to move toward them. From waiting proceeds favor, mercy, strength and a godly heritage.

From waiting proceeds favor, mercy, strength and a godly heritage.

("Confirming Scriptures": Numbers 8:24-25; Psalm 123:2; 130:18; Isaiah 30:18; 40:31; John 15:4-8; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1-2; James 5:7)

I am featuring Keith's practice of listening prayer as a way to encourage us to notice God's work in the world. Some who have been abused by an earthly father may not be comfortable addressing God in this way. Since I lost my father at a young age, I am comforted by such words of assurance and direction. May you, too, find comfort and hope through moments spent listening to God. TM

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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# The narcissism of small differences

Everett J. Thomas

In this month's News Analysis (page 44), Harvey Yoder anguishes about divisions and church "divorces" among Mennonites.

"Today there are 12 different Mennonite subgroups in Rockingham County (Va.) alone, and there are signs of even more church divorces to come," Yoder writes. "... I find this multiplicity of divisions beyond embarrassing."

Yoder goes on to say that what we lose—as we politely agree to disagree and go our separate ways—are important connections that enhance learning and create a sense of needed accountability with each other.

But why do we divide?

Mennonites living in close physical proximity to each other are separated on Sunday mornings because of divergent convictions and theologies.

I mentioned Yoder's complaint in a recent Sunday school discussion. Afterward, a friend alerted me to Sigmund Freud's contention that such divisions can sometimes be a form of excessive self-interest. Borrowing from an earlier scholar, Freud described it as "the narcissism of small differences." He observed that communities with adjoining territories—and related to each other in other ways as well—engage in constant feuds and ridicule each other.

So the question is whether the differences over which we argue and divide are "small." For some they are; for others they are not. And in most parts of this country there are varieties of Mennonites living in close physical proximity to each other but separated on Sunday mornings by divergent convictions and theologies.

But I have also seen signs that some of us are willing to do the hard work of listening to others whose perspectives and beliefs seem wrong. This hard work is being done mostly by area conferences. Here are two examples:

David Boshart, executive conference minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference, published an article in the February issue of the conference newsletter entitled "Why I Have Hope for the Church." In the article he describes a process leaders are using to give and receive counsel in relationship to a policy on marriage adopted by Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis. Each congregation was asked to send three people "full of wisdom and the Spirit" to regional discussions. Boshart observes that there was a high level of participation. He also says, "Participants ... embodied extraordinary wisdom, spiritual maturity, interpersonal sensitivity and open communication. ... This was a rare opportunity for our members to talk to one another about agreements and disagreements on matters of faith and life."

In Allegheny Mennonite Conference, a different process is unfolding as the conference looks at its relationship with Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church. AMC placed the congregation under discipline in 2005, which means the church's members cannot vote or hold an office in the conference or in Mennonite Church USA. AMC has created a reconcilation discernment committee that will discern what reconciliation means in this relationship.

Most of the stories we read are published in conference newsletters. Invariably, the reports describe conference delegates in table group discussions that are lively and respectful. What is encouraging about this is that the issues being discussed are not "small details." Those willing to participate do so because of their love for the church. Maybe the opposite of Freud's phrase describes this new pattern: yieldedness in the face of major differences.—*ejt*

**Note:** The U.S. Postal System announced on April 17 that it was increasing scrutiny of all mail after ricin-tainted letters were sent to elected officials on April 8. The additional security may delay delivery of *The Mennonite.*

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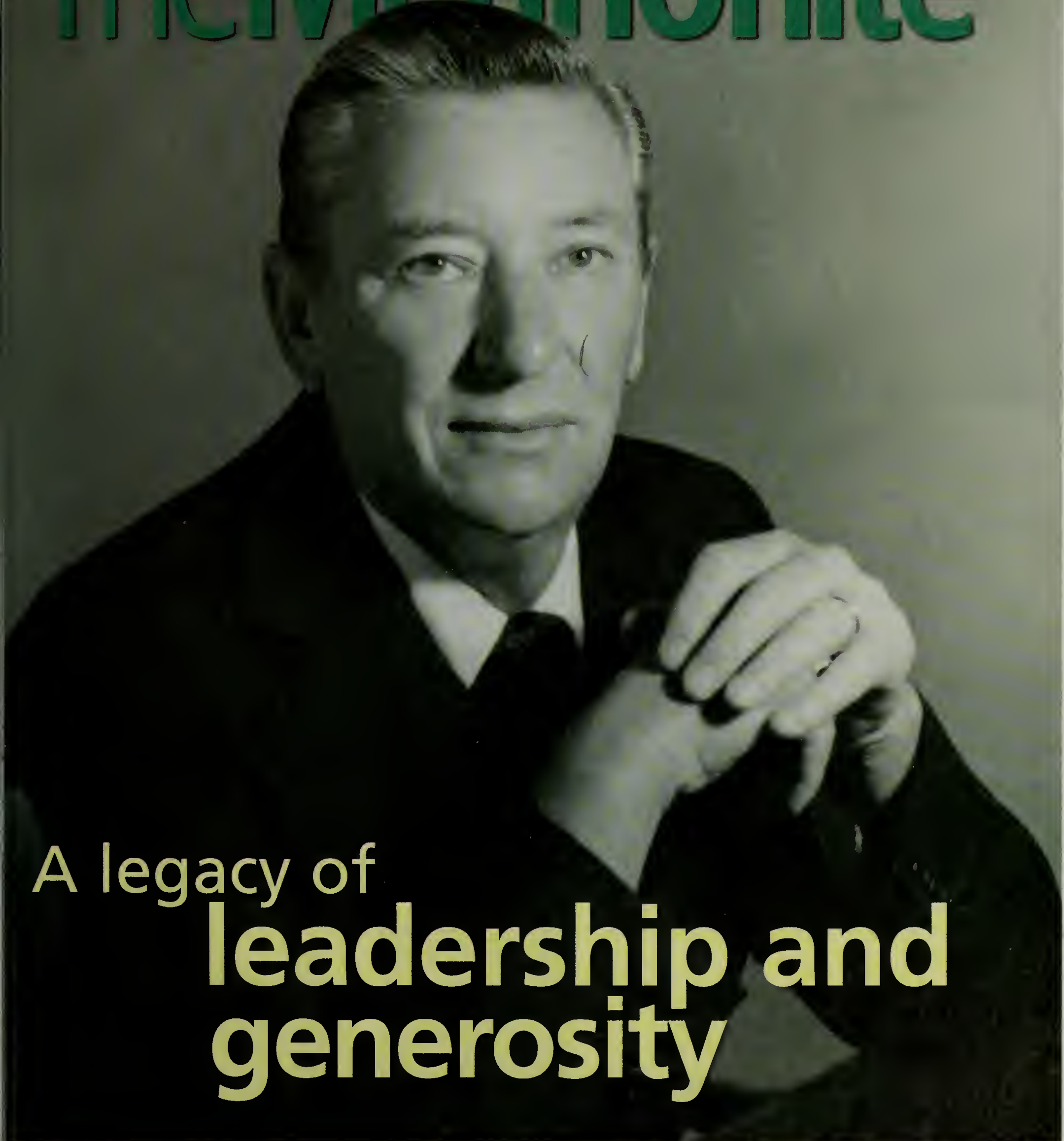

# A legacy of leadership and generosity

June 2013

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- An unearned citizenship
- God at work through the little things
- Books on Emergence, saints, Yoder
- Should we censor history?

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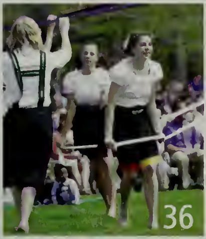

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ON THE COVER: Photo supplied

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### Young adults, boomer anxiety

Peter Epp's article "Why Don't Young Adults Go to Church?" (May) is helpful, but he danced around the answer. I agree with Epp that we millennials are a fickle generation with great potential for leadership and change—if we ever decide to do anything. And we also recognize that the best way for us to grow in our faith is to be "forced" to be around people who are different from us. But as I have ministered to and between many generations for the past nine years, I think we on the younger end hear more behind the question, Is there anything the rest of us can do to welcome [you] back? and those are the things that make us not want to be part of the church.

First, there is a lot of adult anxiety behind this question. When a boomer asks this question of a millennial, we hear fears that "the church will die with me" or, "I failed as a parent." These are real, valid and good things to be anxious about, and I do not want to belittle the soul searching and self-doubt that comes with this anxiety. But the boomer must remember that we have grown up now. We are not motivated by your anxiety. However, we do feel loved by your concern.

Second this question reiterates, reeducates and empowers us in the ways of individualism and consumerism. These are the things that the culture has trained us to be and do. But intuitively, we know the empty addiction that comes with centering the universe around "me" and consuming things in order to find a sense of self. When the church follows suit, there is skepticism about the church. At best we begin to think, You just want me for my offering, but I still live with my parents so that I can pay off my college debt.

Third, and somewhat related to the second one, we hear, "Pleasing you will keep you around." This is what we have known of the church for 20 years, and we are tired of it. When we were in MYF, it sounded more like, What's something fun we can do that would make you want to invite your friends? We have grown up, so why is the church still treating us like it did when we were 14? A church preoccupied with pleasing people to get them back and keep them around is not a church, it's any consumer-driven organization concerned with brand loyalty.

Part of our generation's sincere, valid, prophetic insight lies in the purpose behind the questions we want to be asked and the things that a church should only be talking about: How can we help each other follow Christ better?

There is no program or worship style that will get us back. Our lives are too filled with other programs and forms of entertainment. The local church needs unapologetically to be and offer the only thing it can: the deep love of Jesus in word, attitude and deed. The church has been and will continue to be a blessing as congregational members use their gifts to do this in ways that pastors never can. *—Daniel Yoder, youth pastor, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.*

### Mennonites and Catholics

I read with appreciation John D. Roth's column in the May issue concerning improving relationships between Mennonites and the Roman Catholic Church. I'm thankful to Roth for bringing attention to recent developments that bode well for increasing dialogue between our two traditions.

One active and ongoing effort toward greater friendship between Mennonites and Catholics that was not mentioned is Bridgefolk, a grassroots movement that brings together Mennonites drawn to the spiritual practices of the Catholic tradition and Catholics attracted to the peace ethic of the Mennonite tradition. Bridgefolk will offer another opportunity for engagement between Mennonites and Catholics at our 12th annual conference, to be held July 25-28 in Waterloo, Ont., with a focus on the theme of reconciliation (see www.bridgefolk.net for details).

The context for Roth's column was the recent inauguration of Pope Francis, which has been well-received across the global church and was attended by representatives of Mennonite World Conference. Several participants in the Bridgefolk movement have contributed comments from various perspectives on the new leader of the Catholic church. These are available at the Bridgefolk website (www.bridgefolk.net/tag/bridgefolk-on-francis/).—*Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, Lima, Ohio*

**Temper justice with mercy**

A prison-wide hunger strike at Guantanamo is now entering its third month, and many prisoners are suffering severe weight loss. Eighty-six of the 166 men have been declared innocent and were cleared for release in 2009 by an interagency Guantanamo Review Task Force established by the president. In fact, more than 160 men who have never been charged with any offense—much less convicted of a war crime—remain at Guantanamo with no end in sight. Nevertheless, our government refuses to allow them to leave. They have not seen their families in that time, and many have children they have never seen and fear they may never get to see.

A hundred men are reported to be on a hunger strike in protest of their indefinite detention, and more than 20 are being force-fed, which in itself is a form of torture—tied to a chair or a bed with a plastic tube threaded down their noses. Five hunger strikers have been hospitalized.

Prisoners are starting to die. Adnan Farjan Abdul Latif writes: "This is a prison that does not know [anything] but the language of power, oppression and humiliation for whoever enters it. … Anyone able to die … has no other hope. I will end it."

America cannot assert any moral authority while Guantanamo remains open. For those not charged with any offense, their long detention is a most serious stain on the U.S. human rights record. Col. Morris Davis says, "There is something fundamentally wrong with a system where not being charged with a war crime keeps you locked away indefinitely, and a war crime conviction is your ticket home."

Congress must stop its constant politics of fear-mongering and give these men their freedom. Let us finally temper our "justice" with a bit of mercy and close Guantanamo immediately. *—Daniel Riehl, Lititz, Pa.*

**Mennonites in novels**

I enjoyed Valerie Weaver-Zercher's excellent article, "The Amish Makeover of Christian Fiction" (April). It brought to mind the 1971 doctoral dissertation of my late father, Stanley Shenk, "The Image of the Mennonites in American Novels, 1900–1970." He took 30 U.S. and Canadian novels and examined them closely, finding that 19 of them presented Mennonites in a largely positive light, while seven were mostly negative about Mennonites. One was 50-50; the other three fell outside his methodology. To his surprise, Dad found that, for the most part, the authors were accurate in portraying

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

We had to learn a new word for this issue: ethnodoxology. Wikipedia says, "Those in this field study local musical traditions and work with local musicians and churches to adapt and develop locally created musical forms for Christian worship."

James Krabill has edited two new books on ethnodoxology and introduces this field (page 18). We also publish two chapters, written by venerable Mennonite women, from one of the books. Eleanor Kreider writes "Artistic Expression in Early Christianity" (page 20). Mary Oyer writes about "A Sabbatical year in Africa That Changed Everything" for her (page 22).

Phoenix resident Laura Glass-Hess writes the fourth and final Bible study for the convention theme "Citizens of God's Kingdom: Healed in Hope" (page 24).

For those not attending the Phoenix convention because of "the sustained persecution of immigrants by the state of Arizona," Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) sponsored a May 3-4 gathering in Fort Myers, Fla., to focus on immigration issues. Our coverage of that event leads off the news section (page 32).

Also in the news section, associate editor Anna Groff publishes two articles: one about a Detroit Mennonite who runs the world's largest urban farm (page 34) and another about a Cherokee Mennonite woman who modeled for an Amish romance novel cover (page 35).

The news section also includes the usual June reporting about commencements at Mennonite colleges, seminaries and universities (page 36) and the story of a 26-year-old congregation with 1,800 attenders that decided to build a community park in their town rather than a new, 1,700-seat auditorium (page 39).—*Editor*

## Albuquerque Church deals with intruder

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—On May 9, Albuquerque police arrested Michael Kelly in the building of Albuquerque Mennonite Church. The building is also used by other groups.

Kelly said he had been sleeping in the church from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. for about six months. In December 2012, the church discovered that about $800 in cash from youth fund-raisers had been stolen from the office.

The church rekeyed the office door locks and installed a safe. Over the next several months, other minor items of cash and grocery gift cards went missing, as well as food from a refrigerator, and the church took more security measures, including installing cameras.

The church met on May 12 to discuss whether or not to press charges. In a May 14 email, Pastor Anita Amstutz wrote that church members arranged themselves on a continuum, and those advocating prosecution outnumbered those advocating dropping charges. But all agreed that restorative justice be activated.

Amstutz wrote: "We wish for restorative justice, not retribution, in this situation. We are concerned for the welfare of Michael Kelly ... and hope that he might use this opportunity to put his life on track rather than continuing to be on the run and avoid responsibility for his actions. We seek rehabilitation and community service rather than long-term imprisonment."

A group of about six agreed to follow the case and meet with Kelly. They also hope to have a say with the district attorney and speak to the criminal justice system.—*Gordon Houser*

## Japanese Mennonites express concern about changes in constitution

FINDLAY, Ohio—Members of Mennonite church conferences in Japan last month sent a statement to Protestant periodicals in Japan. It expresses grave concern over the emerging potential today of a revision to Japan's post-World War II constitution, which renounced the right to wage war.

The statement reads, in part: "The sole role model for us to follow in our faith and life is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the Lord of Peace, not the Lord of War."

The statement goes on to express concern that some want to change the constitution, particularly Article 9, which renounces war.

The statement concludes: "We also call on all Christians who hear and follow the words of the Lord Jesus to defend the Constitution of Japan and its Article 9. It is our hope that we transcend our denominational boundaries and unify to bring about peace, and with the leading of the Holy Spirit, combine our efforts so that we may be called children of God."—*Ken Shenk*

Travis Tice

### Playing ball in Kenya

Joseph gets ready to bat. Eastern Mennonite Missions GO! participant Travis Tice coaches Kenyan kids in baseball. He works with the Kenya Redsox, a Nairobi-based organization with a long-term commitment to minister to at-risk kids through recreational sports. Tice connects with kids who live in a nearby slum community and street kids who fend for themselves.—*EMM*

## Derksen named Congo coordinator for MC USA

ELKHART, Ind.—Rick Derksen of Seattle began May 1 in the role of volunteer Congo coordinator for Mennonite Church USA. Derksen and Marilyn, his wife, served with Africa Inter-Mennonite Missions from 1977 to 1998 in Congo.

As Congo coordinator, Derksen's responsibilities will be twofold. First, he will assist in coordinating the relationship between Mennonite Church USA and Congolese denominational partners. Second, he will assist in connecting congregations in the United States who already have relationships with Congo so that they can work together better.—*Mennonite Church USA*

## Australian mission workers cultivate community

ELKHART, Ind.—For husband-and-wife team Mark and Mary Hurst, ministry is not reserved for the inside of a worship hall or for within an organizational structure.

Ministry can take place in a garden or at the ocean. It can happen while knitting a baby blanket. It can be as simple as offering advice about raising children.

"For us, it is 'loving God and our neighbors as ourselves,' " Mark says.

"So building relationships with people through gardening, ocean swimming, and knitting is as important to us as leading worship, doing Bible study and teaching about peace and justice."

Since 1990, the Hursts have served as resource people and pastors in Australia with the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand. They began as mission associates with Mennonite Mission Network in 2000 and have been living in Sydney, Australia, since 2008.

The Hursts build networks, conduct workshops on conflict transformation, and provide services to members and others interested in Anabaptism. They are also part-time pastors at Avalon Baptist Peace Memorial Church in Avalon, a beachside community in Sydney's Northern Beaches. Their approach to ministry is simply about cultivating community, they say.

"We try to build relationships with people and let our lives and words reflect Jesus and what it means to follow him," Mark says.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

## MCC encourages Egyptian youth with disabilities to counter stigma

BENI SUEF, Egypt—Bola Melad Ragheb looks like a typical Egyptian youth, with a shock of dark hair and a warm smile. Only 17, he likes playing soccer on a computer with his friends. He prefers tea to coffee and relies on the greasy goodness of French fries to help him through the long, vegan-food-only, Coptic fasts.

Yet when Bola walks, it becomes apparent he faces an added degree of adversity in life. At the age of 3, he contracted polio, causing him to limp.

Later, his mother heard about a program that helps young people with disabilities. Run by St. Mary Church in the town of El Fashen, its aim is to help students with disabilities integrate into the school system and succeed in their education. The program is sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) Global Family education program through a partner, Ekhlas Coptic Organization for Development.

"One of the main goals of the program at St. Mary is to build the students' confidence and encourage them that even though they have disabilities, they also have capabilities and rights," says Trish Wiebe, MCC Egypt's program coordinator, from Blumenort, Manitoba. The program also helps bring together people with disabilities who find support through friendships. —*MCC*

## MDS project in Walker County, Alabama, closes

WALKER COUNTY, Ala.—Almost exactly two years after tornadoes devastated parts of the south, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) celebrated a final home dedication in Walker County.

On April 27, 2011, Alabama residents experienced one of the worst tornado outbreaks ever. More than 60 tornadoes were reported on that day across the state, and 243 people lost their lives. More than 13,000 homes were destroyed or heavily damaged across Alabama. Cordova, Birmingham and surrounding areas took a direct hit.

Jessie Williams' home was destroyed by the tornado. Now, thanks to the Walker County Long-Term Recovery Committee, MDS and World Renew, and many faithful volunteers, Williams has a place to call home again.

Bill and Esther McCoy, project coordinators involved with the MDS response for the past two years, report, "This home was the last one to be built by the Walker County Long-Term Recovery program, so it was done cooperatively by MDS and World Renew."

In the two years that MDS has been responding in Walker County, 1,589 volunteers worked 11,586 days on 292 cleanups, 82 minor repairs, 12 major repairs and four complete new builds. —*MDS*

Photo provided

### Pedaling for ice cream and relief

Les Gustafson-Zook, newly appointed coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee North American relief sales, rides a bike attached to the five-gallon ice cream maker. Tim Yoder and Russ Buschert, engineers, are in background at the Idaho Mennonite World Relief Festival held April 19-20. The sale garnered more than $51,000 in sales, while attendees pedaled the Cycling Creamery and created 20 gallons of delicious homemade ice cream.—*Beth Landis*

# The good glitches

**Sara Dick**
is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Do your gadgets have glitches to which you've grown accustomed or resigned yourself? Mine do.

Take my computer at work: For a couple of months, I've had to get down on my hands and knees to turn it on. First I flip the switch "off" on the back of the tower. Then, after waiting a few seconds, I turn it back "on," and finally, I press the big "on" button on the front to actually start the machine.

At that point I can stand up again, dust myself off and begin my computer-related tasks. Beginning my workday with several seconds on my knees seemed a ready-made prayer opportunity, so I decided not to ask for a fix.

Such inconveniences are sometimes called "first-world problems." My unusual computer startup routine fits neatly among other nontragic problems, such as espresso drinks made with the wrong kind of milk, broken iThingies and flight delays.

**A month ago** I had another first-world problem: The phone company accidentally disconnected my Internet connection before they could install my new connection. This happened after hours on the phone with different customer service representatives half a world away, rarely getting the same answer twice.

I burst into tears there under my desk, very much in need of the grace of God.

Frustration increasing, I heard myself speaking rudely to the representative. When the really bad news came—FOUR WHOLE DAYS without home Internet—I wondered if I would start yelling.

I had a serious case of first-world entitlement-itis and, with a 9-year-old listening to my end of the calls, I worried it could be contagious.

I had recently watched the movie *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, about British retirees moving to India. I felt myself easily superior to the nasty characters who looked down—way down—on all things Indian. I would never complain about curry and traffic, as they did.

*Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.*—Matthew 7:3-5

And I didn't complain … until the day someone in a faraway call center quoted me yet another price, asked me to wait on hold for the fourth time and took away my Internet for four days. Then I began to feel ugly.

**I knew my anger** was out of place, but it took several minutes for me to stop myself. In my imagination, I heard the voice of a friend telling me simply to stop. So I did.

I thanked the customer service representative on the phone for his help and said I'd be grateful for my restored home Internet connection whenever it happened. Then I got on my bike—still addled by my anger—and pedaled to church for an afternoon at the office.

Thanks be to God, my first-world problem number one came to the rescue.

"God forgive me," I uttered as I got down on my knees to start my computer. I burst into tears there under my desk, very much in need of the grace of God.

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;*
*according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions*.—Psalm 51:1

I saw with utter despair the sin of my rudeness toward the customer service representative and the underlying sin of cultural superiority that allowed my rudeness to flourish as it did. I was also grateful for my friend's imagined voice—speaking the truth in love—that helped me change my path in that moment.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,*
*and put a new and right spirit within me.*—Psalm 51:10

**The work of curing** first-world entitlement-itis is tied closely for me with the work here at home of undoing racism, sexism, heterosexism and other "isms." It is difficult work, possible only through God's healing grace and our commitment to God's reign "on earth as it is in heaven."

*I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.*—Revelation 9:9

I thank God for the glitches that send me to my knees, physically and spiritually. And I thank God for the women and men whose voices remind me of the gap between the here-and-now and John's vision of a new city in which "nothing accursed will be found"—not first-world problems or hunger or pain or loneliness or oppression.

# 'The Anabaptist martyrs are not dead'

Early on April 12, 1528, members of the Anabaptist congregation in the German city of Augsburg gathered in the home of Susanna Doucher, located along the Bürgergässchen, for an Easter Sunday sunrise service.

At the time, Augsburg was a vibrant center of the Anabaptist movement in south Germany. Already in 1526, only a year after the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, the congregation had grown to include between 700 and 1,000 people, despite the fact that they were forced to meet in secret. By 1527, the group had developed its own organization for poor relief, a regular Bible study for members, a rudimentary job-placement program for immigrants and a plan for training evangelists. That August, the congregation hosted a mission conference that included dozens of Anabaptist leaders from Switzerland, the provinces of Austria and numerous surrounding German territories.

At the same time, however, resistance to the movement from Augsburg and elsewhere was growing. During the fall of 1527, most of the leaders of the Augsburg congregation were arrested, tortured and banished, and the city issued dire warnings against anyone caught baptizing or meeting in secret. Indeed, in the aftermath of the August mission conference, so many of the leaders present there were executed that the gathering became known as the "Martyrs Synod."

**Yet, despite these storm clouds** on that April morning of 1528, the beleaguered congregation of Augsburg gathered to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Early in the service, Hans Leupold, who had received a warning that authorities might break up the meeting, encouraged anyone who was afraid to leave. At around 7 a.m., the police arrived and arrested all 88 members who had remained—"men and women, old and young, servants and maids, citizens and foreigners." The foreigners, about half the group, were immediately banished; the rest were imprisoned, tortured, interrogated and forced to flee upon their release. Although individual Anabaptists continued to live in the city, by the early 1530s the congregation in Augsburg had ceased to exist.

On April 12, 2013, 485 years later, the mayor of Augsburg gathered with a group of Mennonites, representatives from the Protestant church and Friedrich Aschoff, a 14th-generation direct descendant of Susanna Doucher, outside Susanna's former home to unveil a plaque commemorating the Augsburg Anabaptists and the events that had taken place there.

**The ecumenical gathering** was one of many initiatives organized by Wolfgang Krauss, a Mennonite historian, theologian and peace activist. For more than a decade, Krauss has directed a project known as Wieder Täufer in Augsburg und Anderswo—a play on the word Wiedertäufer (Anabaptists) that calls attention to the fact that Mennonites are alive and well in Augsburg today. As a young adult, Krauss encountered Christ in the midst of a personal crisis and soon thereafter became a convinced member of the Mennonite church in Germany. Since then, he has been a tireless promoter of Anabaptist history, ecumenical encounters and the renewal of the Mennonite church and its peace witness.

Krauss recognizes that a focus on Anabaptist persecution can encourage attitudes of self-righteousness among contemporary Mennonites and may seem to be at odds with his commitment to ecumenical dialogue. But he is equally clear that forgiveness does not imply forgetting. "The Anabaptist martyrs are not 'our' martyrs," Krauss insists. "They died as witnesses to Christ, and like all the martyrs of the church, they belong to that cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). They point us to Christ, … and if we ignore them, we obscure the witness of Christ and weaken the gospel." "This is not about an identity of victimhood," Krauss says. "But the Anabaptist martyrs are not dead. They live on as those who have been resurrected and are part of the contemporary cloud of witnesses in the fellowship of the church today."

Stories of 16th-century Anabaptists may seem like ancient history to Mennonites in North America. But for many brothers and sisters in the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church, the account of Susanna Doucher and the Augsburg Anabaptist congregation is almost certain to sound familiar, particularly to those groups who face the challenge of persecution and suffering still today. As Wolfgang Krauss reminds us, we remember the Anabaptist story not as a Golden Age we must return to but as a living testimony to Christ's presence that joins the church today with a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. I am grateful for people like Krauss who keep these stories alive as a gift to the whole church.

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

This is not about an identity of victimhood. —Wolfgang Krauss

# The wealth gap keeps getting wider

Believe it or not, we're in an economic recovery. But if you're not in the upper 7 percent of American households, you may not realize it. If you're among the rest, 93 percent of American households, you may still be feeling pinched.

According to a report released April 23 by the Pew Research Center, "wealth inequality widened dramatically during the first two years of the economic recovery, as the upper 7 percent of American households saw their average net worth increase 28 percent while the wealth of the other 93 percent declined," writes Michael A. Fletcher in the *Washington Post*. The uneven recovery has only accelerated a decades-long trend of growing wealth inequality in the country, despite rising popular and political awareness of the dynamic.

From 2009 to 2011, the Pew report says, the average net worth of the nation's 8 million most affluent households jumped from an estimated $2.7 million to $3.2 million. And for the 111 million households that form the bottom 93 percent, average net worth fell 4 percent, from $140,000 to an estimated $134,000, the report said.

These changes mean that between 2009 and 2011, "the wealth gap separating the top 7 percent and everyone else increased from 18-to-1 to 24-to-1" and that "the most affluent 7 percent of households owned 63 percent of the nation's household wealth in 2011, up from 56 percent in 2009."

Why such a disparity in net worth? Mostly it's because the wealthiest households have their assets concentrated in stocks and other financial instruments, while others' wealth is concentrated in their homes. During the recovery, stock values have rebounded and reached new highs, while housing values have stayed mostly flat.

**This widening gap applies to all Americans**, but "the last half-decade has proved far worse for black and Hispanic families than for white families, starkly widening the already large gulf in wealth between non-Hispanic white Americans and most minority groups, according to a new study from the Urban Institute," writes Annie Lowrey in an April 28 article in the *New York Times*.

The Urban Institute study found that while the wealth gap widened, the income gap between white Americans and nonwhite Americans remained stable, writes Lowrey. "As of 2010, white families, on average, earned about $2 for every $1 that black and Hispanic families earned, a ratio that has remained roughly constant for the last 30 years. But when it comes to wealth—as measured by assets, like cash savings, homes and retirement accounts, minus debts, like mortgages and credit card balances—white families have far outpaced black and Hispanic ones. Before the recession, non-Hispanic white families, on average, were about four times as wealthy as nonwhite families, according to the Urban Institute's analysis of Federal Reserve data. By 2010, whites were about six times as wealthy."

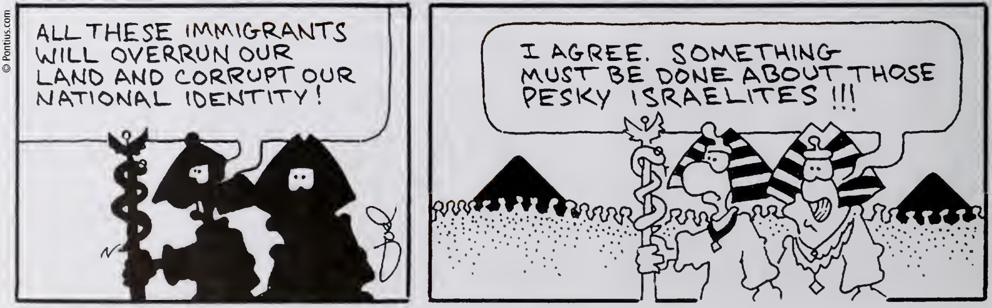
By the most recent data, the average white family had about $632,000 in wealth, versus $98,000 for black families and $110,000 for Hispanic families, the report said.

Two major factors helped to widen this wealth gap in recent years. The first is that the housing downturn hit black and Hispanic households harder than it hit white households, in aggregate. Second, black families suffered bigger hits to their retirement savings, the Urban Institute found.

Without changes to government policies, it's only going to get worse. "The Urban Institute suggests reforming government policies that encourage savings but disproportionately benefit the already wealthy and families with high incomes, like the home mortgage interest deduction," writes Lowrey.

Such a wealth gap is far from the justice Jesus called us to practice.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle Joel Kauffmann


ALL THESE IMMIGRANTS WILL OVERRUN OUR LAND AND CORRUPT OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY!
I AGREE. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT THOSE PESKY ISRAELITES !!!

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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

“African-American clergy leaders hear daily the cries of the parents, family and friends of those whose precious lives have been snuffed out by guns and other types of violence.” —Rev. Carroll Baltimore, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention

## Choosing ignorance over research

Over the past 20 years, the number of deaths from motor vehicle crashes has dropped by 31 percent, deaths from fire by 38 percent and deaths from drowning by 52 percent. These advances came as a result of interventions based on research. In 1996, pro-gun members of Congress were able to sharply reduce the funding that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received for research on injury and death from firearms. Two years later, Congress curtailed research on the subject at all agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services, including the National Institutes of Health. Since 1997, at least 470,000 people in the United States have died from gunshot wounds, including more than 165,000 who were victims of homicide.—*Christian Century*

**1.3%**

of the income of the wealthiest 20 percent of Americans goes to charity.

**3.2%**

of the income of the poorest 20 percent of Americans goes to charity.

—*The Atlantic*

## A train run by a drunken engineer

Here are excerpts from a presentation to a State Department hearing on Keystone XL draft environmental impact statement at Grand Island, Neb., on April 18 by Duane Ediger, congregational chair of First Church of the Brethren of Chicago, a reservist with Christian Peacemaker Teams and a member of the Illinois Coalition for a Moratorium on Fracking: “Eighty years ago, leaders of what would become Exxon, BP and Royal Dutch Shell got together in secret in Scotland and formed an oil cartel to set prices and carve up oil-producing areas for their mutual financial benefit. In league with the military industrial complex that developed after World War II, this still-secret cartel set up and toppled governments at will. What’s left of fossil fuel supplies, God’s good earth, climate survivability and accountable government are all at stake in this fight. … Greenhouse gases are currently entering our atmosphere at a rate 1.8 times the rate the atmosphere is capable of dispersing them. Per capita, the United States’ contribution is still four times that of China or India. Unless we set as a baseline for purposes of environmental impact the 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by about 2043 needed in order to avoid irreversible catastrophic harm from climate change, our situation is like being on a train headed for a known bridge out and heeding the drunken engineer’s demand to go full throttle and keep our hands off the brakes.”

## Changing minds about doctored photos

When Julia Bluhm, 14, from Waterville, Maine, got tired of looking at heavily doctored photos of young models in her fashion magazines, she didn’t just moan about it; she launched a petition on change.org that got more than 50,000 signatures. This got the attention of Seventeen editor Ann Shoket, who last July announced a Body Peace Treaty and pledged to keep it real for future spreads.—*Columbia Journalism Review*

## Illegal immigration lowest in 40 years

Illegal entry is at its lowest level in 40 years. More than 25 percent of immigrants are non-Mexican (it used to be 95 percent). The U.S. government spends more on immigration enforcement than all the other federal law enforcement agencies combined, including the FBI, DEA, ATF and Secret Service. And the Mexican economy is improving; the wage gap between the United States and Mexico, which used to be 7 to 1, is now 4 to 1. —*Newsweek*

## Meet antipoverty goals, say clerics

With fewer than 1,000 days left to meet the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, religious leaders from the G-8 countries are pushing heads of government to renew their efforts to meet the antipoverty benchmarks by 2015. The MDGs are eight development targets that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and include targets on reducing extreme poverty, improving child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS.—*Religion News Service*

### 4 things you should know about Colombia’s armed conflict

1. First and foremost, the war is about land.
2. Human rights defenders continue to risk their lives by nonviolently struggling for justice and attempting to return to their land.
3. It is the most dangerous place for a union organizer in the world.
4. The United States has given billions of dollars in military aid to Colombia.

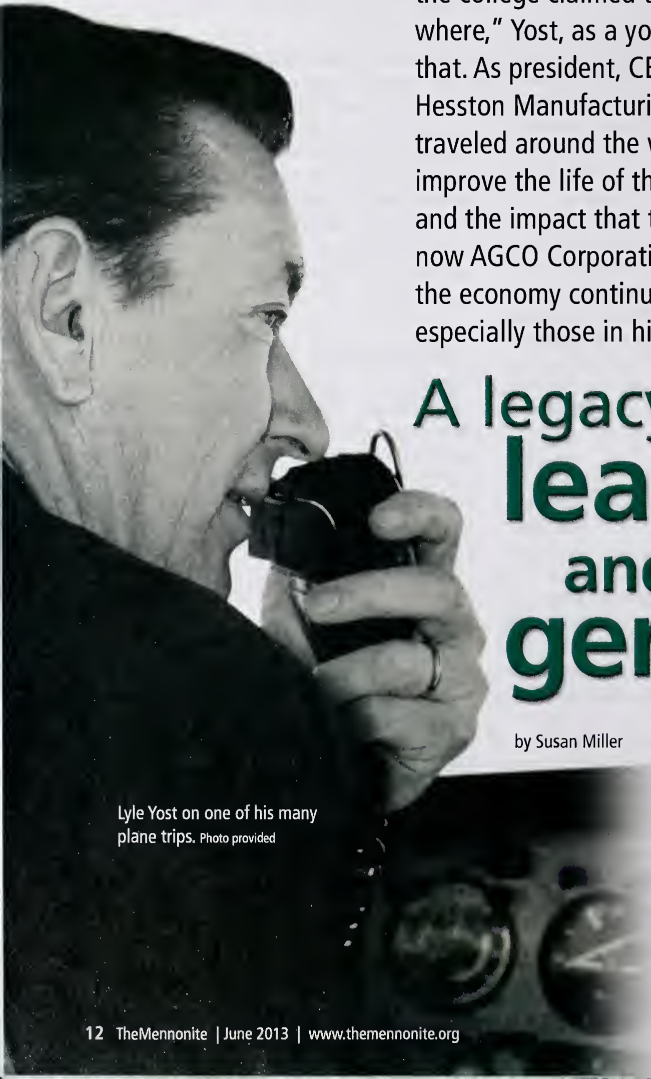
—*Christian Peacemaker Teams*

**Lyle Yost improved the lives of farmers and benefited future generations.**

Hesston College put the town of Hesston, Kan., on the Mennonite map, but it took the entrepreneur Lyle E. Yost to make the town's name recognizable around the world on Hesston-branded machinery. Years before the college claimed the tag line, "Start Here, Go Everywhere," Yost, as a young Mennonite farmer, did just that. As president, CEO and chair of the board of Hesston Manufacturing/Hesston Corporation, he traveled around the world to achieve his goal: "to improve the life of the farmer." Yost's philanthropy and the impact that the corporation he founded—now AGCO Corporation's Hesston facility—has on the economy continue to bless people in many ways, especially those in his hometown.

# A legacy of leadership and generosity

by Susan Miller


Lyle Yost on one of his many plane trips. Photo provided

**Yost died April 5, 2012,** exactly 11 months before his 100th birthday.

Yost spent a lot of his growing up time with his grandparents, Peter and Suzanna Yost, members of the Church of God in Christ Mennonite, who lived beside the farm home he shared with his sister Zella, and parents, Joseph and Edith Alma (Hensley) Yost, absorbing their faith and farming ingenuity.

He graduated from Hesston Academy just before the Great Depression forced the college part of the academy and Bible school to shut down for a few years. Before returning to Hesston College as a freshman, Yost helped his family survive the Dust Bowl by driving around the Great Plains, acquiring abandoned, dust-covered machinery and bringing the implements back home to refurbish and resell in his father's farm implement dealership.

Yost continued his education at Goshen (Ind.) College, graduating in 1937 with a degree in economics and completing a second bachelor's degree in education in 1942. He married Erma Martin on July 31, 1938, after five years of courtship.

Hesston College President Milo Kauffman had visited Erma and her sister Ruby in their Minot, N.D., home and recruited them to come to Hesston College, where Erma and Lyle met. On their first date, Lyle took her to Pennsylvania Mennonite Church (which later moved to a new building in town and changed its name to Whitestone) for a Sunday evening service in which his uncle, Earvy Yost, preached and sang. After Erma's death, Lyle noted in a letter to his children, "As they were placing [Erma's] headstone, here I stand 75 yards (a pitching wedge) and 70 years from where I had my first date."

During their marriage, the couple experienced the sorrow of the stillbirth of their first daughter and the joys of parenting Byron, Winston, Susan and Cameron. They endured the rigors of custom harvesting and the exhilaration of a transatlantic Concorde supersonic jet flight. Erma used her talents to help start the first kindergarten and public library in Hesston while adapting from a rural farm to an international corporate lifestyle with Lyle. In retirement the couple enjoyed more time together, traveling, golfing, reading and enjoying their grandchildren.

After Yost worked at a bank and taught in Elkhart County, Ind., the death of his father and the draft board's farm deferment obligated him to return to his family's farm near Hesston in 1943. He spent the next four years farming and custom harvesting.

**Knowing that a farmer's livelihood** depends on getting grain harvested and stored while the sun shines, Yost grew impatient with the harvesting time lost in manually unloading stopped combines. To save the day, he invented an unloading auger and took his plans to Adin Holdeman, who made the prototype in his Hesston Machine Shop. Elmer Berner, an implement dealer, found eager buyers for the combine attachment, and the three men joined to found Hesston Manufacturing Company to mass-produce the augers in 1947.

> While busy envisioning new products for farmers, Yost took actions to improve his community to make it an inviting place to live and showcase his factory.

In 1955, the growing manufacturing company produced its first self-propelled farm instrument and branded it the Hesston Swather. Swathers (also called windrowers) and many of the implements that followed made haymaking a one-person job and established Hesston's reputation as a leading manufacturer of hay and forage implements. When the new public high school replaced Hesston Academy, students chose the Hesston Swather as their unique mascot, since by the mid-1960s "Hesston Corp." had become such an important part of the city's identity and prosperity.

Yost, while busy envisioning new products for farmers, took actions to improve his community to make it an inviting place to live and showcase his factory.

He became president of Hesston's first Chamber of Commerce and used his influence with the city to "insist that all the streets be curbed and guttered," his daughter Susan Yost says. He wanted the city to be "tidied up."

He and two other entrepreneurs, Roy Mullet and LeRoy King, helped start the municipal Hesston Golf Park. Last year, a younger generation of friends and family members of the three "founders" and of the first Hesston golf pro, Dean Adkisson, raised enough money and in-kind donations to fully fund the new Dean Adkisson Learning Center, which was dedicated this spring. The center will help youth learn the game these golfers love, and a scholarship fund will help economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth participate.

Lyle Yost, right, with Giovanni Agnelli, the chairman of Fiat, on Nov. 17, 1986.
Photo provided

> When Mennonite farmers were struggling, [Yost] helped not only the Mennonites but the world. He knew how to follow Jesus in the marketplace.
> —Peter Wiebe

Floyd Sowers, planner of the fund-raising event, says, "The response was unbelievable—all because of the impact that all four of those individuals had on the community."

**Ahead of his time in many ways**—Lyle got his pilot license in 1945 and flew his private Cessna to scout the best routes for his custom combining crews—Yost, like the biblical Esther, was a leader "for such a time as this," Peter Wiebe said at Yost's memorial service. Wiebe was Yost's pastor at Hesston Mennonite Church for 13 years in the 1960s and '70s, and visited him at his winter home in Arizona.

"When Mennonite farmers were struggling, he helped not only the Mennonites but the world," Wiebe said. "He knew how to follow Jesus in the marketplace."

Yost was determined to manufacture and market quality products. When the first clutches failed on the augers his factory manufactured, Yost offered replacement clutches at the manufacturer's cost. "[That] decision gave dealers and buyers confidence in the honesty of management and assured them that the company was here to stay," Murray Bandy wrote (in *Hesston Centennial, 1886-1986*).

Nearly all the first officers and employees of the corporation were local Mennonites, and quite a few were related to each other. Even today, 70 percent of the 1,500 AGCO employees live within a 20-mile radius of Hesston, says AGCO's human resources director Tom Nutting.

In the early years, many farmers worked on production lines in the winter months and returned to work their farms in the spring. Yost welcomed the farmers' ideas for creating and improving new farm products and promoted promising employees, keeping morale high.

Employee Gary Vogt, whose father had worked on Yost's custom-harvesting crews, began working at the Corp. after he graduated from high school in 1962 and resigned in 1989 to start his own business. His jobs over the years included finish assembly worker, fork lift operator, engineer, experimental mechanic, production control supervisor, materials analyst and more.

"[Working for Lyle] was very exciting because the Corp. started from nothing. If you worked hard you could go places in the Corp," Vogt says.

**While Yost's creativity, ambition**, persistence and confidence in his ideas for making things better led to much of Hesston Corp.'s success, he was quick to acknowledge the contributions of others. Near the end of his career as president of Hesston Corp., he wrote, "I tell managers that my success with this company has been in bringing in the right people, people who know more about their specialty than I do, and I depend on them" (quoted in Mary Hess' *Anatomy of a Town, Hesston, Kansas*).

Yost combined his love for flying, invention and problem solving with ways to help others. In the early years, he would land his Cessna in a farmer's field, troubleshoot mechanical problems, then fly back home and make changes to the implements just before they went into production.

When his flying included overnight hotel stays, Yost took along Gideon Bibles and placed them in hotels. He served as President of the Kansas Gideons Chapter and Trustee of Gideons International.

He took his family, sometimes one child at a time, with him on business trips, giving them the opportunity to spend quality time with him as they traveled around the world.

At the time Hesston Corp. was growing the most, Yost made at least six trips to South America to direct the work of Mennonite Economic Development Associates in Uruguay during its first 25 years. "MEDA was the perfect position for him," Wiebe says. Yost served on the MEDA board from 1963 to 1985.

"He realized there was emptiness and a need for the church to become involved in helping those who need help," Susan Yost says.

"In 1961, when Lyle joined MEDA, we had projects only in Paraguay," says Allan Sauder, MEDA president. "He began raising funds in Kansas to support a group of very poor farmers, living hand to mouth on their small farms in Uruguay. It was Lyle's keen business sense that recognized an opportunity to sell their milk products into the larger markets of Montevideo. During one of the many trips he made to Uruguay, together with his wife, Erma, Lyle convinced farmers that a creamery would help them earn more income—money they desperately needed to feed their families, to educate their children, to afford better health care and be able to dream about increasing their farms beyond the subsistence level.

"Today, many thousands of small farmers are able to access better markets using the value-chain approach pioneered by people like Lyle."

Hesston Corp. continued to grow as it acquired manufacturing plants in North America and Europe In 1974, when he was selected Kansan of the Year, Yost was leading "a worldwide conglomerate with a total of 11 operating divisions ... and a work force of some 4,000 employees, more than 2,500 of them in Hesston alone" (Billy M. Jones, *Factory on the Plains, Lyle Yost and the Hesston Corporation*).

In 1975, when "the company was enjoying the longest and strongest surge in its brief history," Jones writes, Yost stepped aside, and Howard Brenneman became president. Yost continued to serve as CEO until 1982. During that interim, the farm recession, overproduction and other factors caused Hesston stock to drop dramatically, and the company faced major losses.

Susan Yost says her father had options: "He could have shut the factory down. But Dad felt a real responsibility, especially for the job security of the Hesston work force."

**The solution that kept the plant operating**, although scaled back, was the result of Yost's negotiation with representatives of the Italian firm Fiat Trattori and the sale of "50.2 percent of Hesston's outstanding voting stock" on Sept. 13, 1977, writes Jones. Fiat's friendly takeover led to the formation of a new corporation retaining the Hesston brand name on hay and forage equipment. In 1991, AGCO purchased the corporation. As an

He could have shut the factory down. But Dad felt a real responsibility, especially for the job security of the Hesston work force.—Susan Yost

Lyle Yost checks an advertising layout. Photo provided

Lyle Yost, left, walking in Hesston with Phyllis Schrock, his neighbor, and Fred, the cat. Photo provided

international corporation, AGCO leads as Hesston and as Harvey County's largest employer and continues to expand even after two years of drought have plagued the Great Plains.

During his retirement, Yost continued his work as a philanthropist and adviser. Throughout his lifetime he supported the church, its educational institutions and personnel, both openly and anonymously. He helped the Milo and Clara Kauffman family through many lean years while Milo served the church and college, and he asked the Chester and Eva Osborne family to make payments on the house they purchased from Yosts to Hesston College.

Lyle Yost led by asking probing questions and encouraging others to do their best.

"He was generous to me [as well]," Wiebe says. "When the time came to change styles, Lyle tossed me a suit." This was just another way the tall business leader with an upright stature shared with the equally tall and upright man in the pulpit.

Current Hesston College President Howard Keim says Yost came to his office yearly advising him to "have something new every year to keep people interested."

Greg Anderson, chaplain at the Prince of Peace Chapel in Aspen, Colo., describes Yost as a man of "warmth, acceptance, gentleness and kindness" and says that Yost in his vision and support for the interfaith chapel he and his Uncle Earvie started "was a century ahead of his time."

The Yosts' lead gift made the construction of Hesston College's largest building possible. At the dedication of Yost Center, Lyle summarized some of his beliefs: "I believe that we are God's workmanship and that we are here for a purpose. ... We are created to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

"I believe that ... we should give back to [God] a part of what we receive—whether it be time, talent or money.

"I believe in the principle of multiplying—a seed planted grows and multiplies. ... A dollar given in faith multiplies many times."

Lyle's gift in 2011 of gliding swings to Mennonite nursing homes in the south central Kansas area is symbolic of his transition from being young, ambitious and innovative to living life in the jet set to handing over leadership responsibilities to younger people to relaxing, reminiscing and letting go of most of his material possessions. He continued to read his Bible and the newspaper every day and remained mentally alert throughout his last year.

Although he held many more leadership positions than one can imagine being doable, he was not a controlling person. He led by asking probing questions and encouraging others to do their best. He helped his children discern their own vocational callings, all unrelated to Hesston Corporation, and supported them in their decisions. Honored in more than 100 publications and with many of the highest awards in industry, Yost retained his humility and kept advancing his goal to improve the lives of farmers. As farmers benefitted, so have and will thousands of others in his generation and in those to come.

Yost leaves a legacy of economic leadership, creativity, kindness and generosity.

*Susan Miller is a free-lance writer and a member of Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.*

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Shé Hall** is the web and social media manager at an advertising agency in Norfolk, Va. She is a member of the praise team and creates many of the digital and print communications media at Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va. Although often not in a position of leadership by title, she takes seriously the power of consumed media to lead people. It can guide, influence, strengthen and more. She is also a member of the board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc.

I've learned the importance of taking care of my mind, will, intellect, emotion and imagination.
—Shé Hall

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**
I do not have one woman as a mentor, however, there are many women in my family, church and community who have mentored me by either spending time directly with me or by allowing their lives to be an example. I've learned lessons in the hardships of being a woman leader who is balancing a career and family. I've learned how to correct those who are following me in love. I've learned the importance of taking care of my mind, will, intellect, emotion and imagination. I've also learned how being a great leader often means being a humble follower.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**
Over the past couple of years I've had the chance to have what I call mentorship powwows with some young women. I stumble upon chances to encourage, support or lend an ear to younger women and, at times, my female counterparts. Some of these women could be church leaders, but I hope their leadership speaks volumes both inside and outside the church's walls.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**
Many of the women I consider mentors are much older than I am. Most of the young women I have a relationship with are within 10 years of my age. The times change so quickly now. It could be beneficial to have someone speak into your life that was in your position just a year ago.

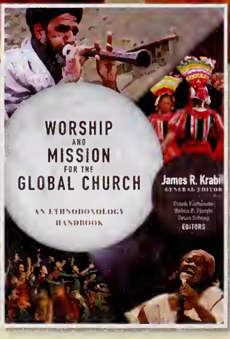
**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**
In my 29 years, most of my impediments in becoming a leader are in my mind. Doubt and worry creep in and know exactly where my focus is hidden. As I take on more leadership roles, I've been able to pick up on the signs of doubt and worry earlier and fill my mind with positive thoughts, music, Scripture and conversation that help keep me on track.

**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**
I'm encouraged by the trials I've had. I'm reminded that I made it to the other side and am better for the lesson learned. I'm also encouraged by two Scriptures: Proverbs 19:21 ("Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.") reminds me that God is in control. Luke 1:45 ("Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her.") reminds me that although I'm facing a challenge, I can keep moving forward by focusing on God's promises to me. They will still come to pass.

**Two new books help us consider worship and mission for the global church.**

# Singing our way into God's future

by James R. Krabill


WORSHIP
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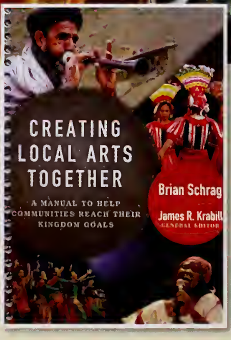
CREATING
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GENERAL EDITOR

**Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook**, edited by James R. Krabill, Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris and Brian Schrag (William Carey Library Publishers, 2013), and **Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals** by Brian Schrag, edited by James R. Krabill (William Carey Library Publishers, 2013), are available from James Krabill, 107 W. Lexington Ave., Elkhart IN 46516; phone: 574-361-2061; email: jamesk@mmnworld.net, the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary bookstore or at www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com

This past December, I had the great joy and satisfaction of seeing released a two-volume set of books on global worship. For almost two years I have served as general editor for these publications, bringing together more than 100 writers from 20 countries to reflect on the general theme of Worship and Mission for the Global Church (see book covers page 18, lower left).

The purpose of these books is to help the people of God imagine what it would be like to use all the arts—music, drama, visuals—for God's purposes in the life of the church. To explore this, we have included theological reflection, global case studies, practical tools and audiovisual resources to increase understanding of and appreciation for culturally appropriate arts in Christian worship and witness.

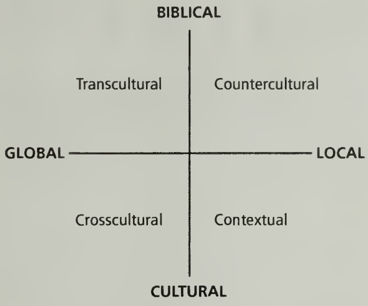
**'A Foretaste of Glory Divine'**

C. Michael Hawn, a professor of global music at Perkins School of Theology, reminds us in chapter 132 (vol. 1) of the vision the Apostle John paints in Revelation 7:9-10. Here we see a multitude from all nations and languages, standing before the throne and singing, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." This passage, says Hawn, "points the church today to the end of time as we know it and offers a vision of what will be—a time when our praise will be universal and our diversity will reveal the splendor of the Creator's imagination."

The church in the West, observes Hawn, "tends to sing only songs that focus on our past (often under the label 'traditional') or songs that reflect the current culture (often under the label 'contemporary'). But what songs might we sing to pull the hope of Revelation into the present? What songs might we sing that would give us glimpses of the gathering described in Revelation 7?" It is time for the 21st century church, declares Hawn, to "sing itself into a new understanding of what it means to be the church."

**A helpful tool for expanding our worship horizons**

Anne Zaki, a global and multicultural resource specialist based in Cairo, Egypt, presents a helpful tool for us in thinking through and designing worship experiences with Revelation 7 in mind. In chapter 13 of the *Handbook*, Zaki sets forth four ways in which "Christian worship relates dynamically to culture" (These are more fully articulated in a document called "The Nairobi Statement of Worship and Culture," developed in 1996 by the Lutheran World Federation Department for Theology and Studies.):



1. First, Christian worship should be **transcultural**—the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture.

2. Second, it should be **contextual**—varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture).

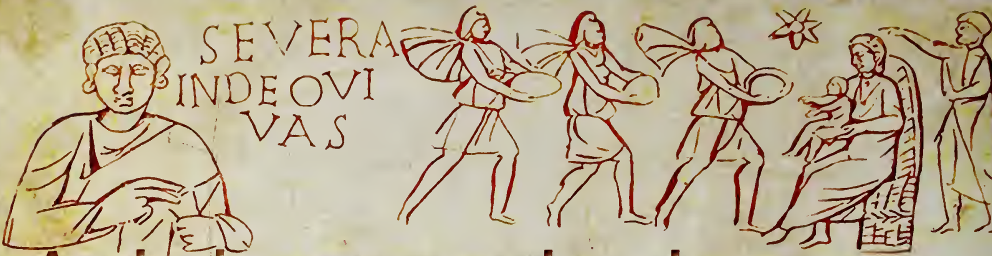
3. Third, it should be **countercultural**—challenging what is contrary to the gospel in a given culture.

4. Fourth, it should be **crosscultural**—making possible sharing between different cultures.

Zaki calls these various features "an intricate four-step dance, where each dancer has certain steps to perform yet always remains conscious of a partner—now pulling together, now pushing apart, ever moving, avoiding a checkmate crisis." To illustrate this interactive dynamic, Zaki suggests the diagram (above) featuring the various components to consider in worship planning.

These are but a few reflections offered to readers as they seek to increase their awareness of God's global family and begin more intentionally to "sing their way into God's future."

*James R. Krabill is senior executive for global ministries for Mennonite Mission Network.*



Catacomb painting | wikipedia.org/wiki/File:

# Artistic expression in early Christianity

## How can Christian practices create artifacts that promote truths and challenge the wider culture?

by Eleanor Kreider

In the early centuries, Christians enculturated their faith by using symbols that affected common life and worship. The following examples of historical symbolic forms reach across cultures and enrich the transmission of the gospel. These examples pose questions for contemporary Christians seeking symbolic expressions in worship.

Christians used distinctive and potent symbols to reflect their faith, values and life-practices.

### Catacomb art

Around the beginning of the third century, Christian communities began to produce and use visual art forms. Why so late? Injunctions against idolatry, resistance to the culture around them, insistence on an invisible God—these may have been reasons. We cannot know for sure. As we see in the Roman catacombs of the third century, Christians began borrowing and adapting a variety of contemporary symbols. Their theological reflection in written texts correlates with a visual language of sacred images. Visual art may have been illustrative or didactic, but it also could be richly exegetical and liturgical.

In catacomb paintings and as bas-relief sculpture on sarcophagi (tombs), heroes and stories of the Bible appear clad in the iconography of Greco-Roman culture. Jesus, as healer and wonder-worker, sometimes carries a "magic" wand. Depicted as a clean-shaven youth, Jesus could as easily be taken for an adolescent Orpheus, who in Greek mythology charmed all living beings with his music and challenged the power of the underworld. Apostles sculpted as full-bearded men look remarkably like heroic Roman statues. Favorite Bible stories (Jonah, the fiery furnace, Lazarus) and depictions of Christ or saints are frequent subjects. Birds and flowers, trees and rivers evoked more than appreciation for nature—they could also be symbols of paradise, of life after death. It is often difficult to differentiate early Christian symbols from pagan prototypes. In the century after the emperor Constantine, when it became safe and advantageous to be a Christian, Christian symbolism became more explicit.

### Signet rings

In Roman times men of substance wore signet rings, which they used to authenticate documents or to label goods for trade. In the late second century, Clement of Alexandria instructed Christian men to wear the signet ring at the base of the little finger. On no account could the ring's image be a lover, for we are a "chaste people," or a sword or bow, "for we cultivate peace," or a drinking cup, "for we practice temperance." The image on the ring could be of a dove, a fish, a ship in full sail or an anchor, which could discretely evoke the cross. In this way Christians used distinctive and potent symbols to reflect their faith, values and life-practices.

### Peace greeting

In the mid-second century, Justin Martyr mentioned the peace greeting as a part of the eucharistic liturgy of the church in Rome. This gesture continued throughout early Christianity in weekly eucharistic services and also at the conclusion of believers' morning prayer following catechetical sessions. The kiss of peace is one of the oldest Christian liturgical practices, noted in several New Testament epistles as the holy kiss or the kiss of peace (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Kissing in public in Greco-Roman culture was reserved for relatives or social equals. The Christian liturgical kiss of peace was countercultural, even scandalous. Enemies of the Christians gossiped and slandered them because Christians exchanged the greeting across social and economic lines in their weekly eucharistic services, as they sought to be reconciled with each other following the teachings of Matthew 5:23–24.

At the appropriate time in the eucharistic service, a deacon announced the peace greeting, often asking if any member of the assembly had a grievance against another. This was the time to greet and be reconciled with the estranged person. Later, during the Christian centuries in Europe, this practice faded, becoming infrequent and in many places confined to the clergy. Since the 20th century, when the peace greeting was reintroduced into Christian liturgies, the physical gesture has varied according to culture—a bow, a hands gesture (namaste), an embrace, a kiss, a handshake.

### Eucharist as a form of the Roman banquet

In 1 Corinthians 11–14, the apostle Paul addresses the Christian community in Corinth about its worship practices. The church had adopted the familiar cultural form of Greco-Roman banquet (meal plus symposium—the after-dinner conversation) for their Lord's Supper. These chapters address a single worship event in a Corinthian house church. Chapter 11 relates to the meal. Chapter 14 deals with the symposium (conversation). Between these two chapters, chapter 12 presents Paul's vision for the multigifted church, and chapter 13 is a paean of praise to the virtue of love and a call to "table manners" of courtesy, deference and honor. Paul, as a missionary theologian, accepted the enculturation of the church's worship within the forms of the banquet.

However, Paul as a pastoral theologian pointed to distortions in the church's practice of the meal and advised the church on how it should rectify these abuses and align its worship with the distinctive values of the Christian faith. For the meal, Paul admonishes the richer believers to stop "showing contempt" to the poorer believers and share food equitably ("discern the body," 11:29). For the symposium (the conversation), Paul rebukes the church's chaotic use of spiritual gifts, which prevented outsiders from participating in worship and kept Christian worship from expressing the character of the "God of peace" (14:33). "Each" and "all" were to contribute according to the gifts of the Spirit (14:26, 31). Multivoiced worship at table was what Paul considered "decent and in order" (14:40). This enculturated form of liturgy included countercultural gestures and practices that created social bonding and radical equalization.

This enculturated form of liturgy included countercultural gestures and practices that created social bonding and radical equalization.

### Architectural space

New Testament churches were domestic gatherings. The host of the home often served as leader of the church. Worship on this domestic scale continued for several centuries, though in some instances the apartments or houses could be fairly large. In the fourth century, by imperial favor, churches in some cities were able to build large buildings to house growing congregations. But house churches continued into the fifth century, when in many places they were displaced by purpose-built church buildings. This new scale of worship necessitated an "amplification"—rhetorical sermons, glorious processions and dramatic liturgy. Now churches were filled with standing crowds and kept in order by patrolling deacons. Imagine the change in how individuals experienced worship. No longer face to face in someone's home and courtyard, worshipers now stood in a grand public space, craning to see and straining to hear what was going on.

### Questions then and now

All these symbols and gestures we have considered in early Christianity—in art, jewelry, meal practices, space—raise questions for today. How can Christians engage practices and create artifacts through which Christian truths become comprehensible yet challenge aspects of wider culture in the name of the gospel?

*Eleanor Kreider teaches at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. This article is excerpted from* Worship and Mission for the Global Church *(William Carey Library Publishers, 2013).*

God opens ways for us of experiencing the worship music of other cultures.

# A sabbatical year in Africa that changed everything

by Mary K. Oyer

In October 1972, at the beginning of a sabbatical in East Africa, I was invited to a three-day conference of Mennonite churches gathered at Shirati, western Tanzania. Each of the 18 congregations in attendance brought a choir, and each choir sang at every session. Enthusiasm ran high and had to be subdued when one group made its way down the aisle so rhythmically that it felt like dance—an unacceptable worship expression in this church tradition. All singing was in parts and unaccompanied because the early missionary pioneers from the United States had represented Mennonites of the a cappella-singing variety.

> I suddenly realized that East African Mennonites were worshiping with 'foreign' materials, even though the English words of the songs had been translated into Swahili.

In the midst of this worship experience, however, there emerged a young girl from the smallest choir, bringing to the front a soda bottle with molded rings at its neck. When the congregation heard the percussive rhythmic accompaniment she provided by rubbing a nail over the rings, they erupted with joy and pleasure. Women ululated in a way I had never heard with the singing of missionary hymns.

What an epiphany for me! I suddenly realized that East African Mennonites were worshiping with "foreign" materials, even though the English words of the songs had been translated into Swahili. The original style of the missionary music had simply not reached into their deepest sound pool, the kind of sound that flowed naturally from their cultural musical heritage.

## My Western musical origins

I had been born into an American Mennonite culture in the 1920s when my group held to a long tradition of a cappella singing in worship. We learned to play instruments, but they belonged to the secular aspect of life.

During the 1950s, I spent a sabbatical leave working on what was then the new doctor of musical arts degree, using cello as my instrument. In addition to serious cello playing, I had the excellent guidance of a cultural history professor in examining what Western Christian artists had experienced across the centuries in pursuing their craft.

Later, during the 1960s, my work on researching and editing a hymnal for Mennonites forced me to face problems of sources and styles of music for worship. I had been exclusively a classical music professor and performer up to that point. Not even folk songs were on my radar. But my colleagues and I agonized over those much-loved hymns we did not personally value. We had to come to grips with the reasons others liked them so well. The Moody-Sankey gospel songs, for example, we needed to learn to know on a different level. And our agreement to work by consensus as a committee forced us to find new ways of evaluating various musical styles and traditions.

This was the period in American hymnody when a few cross-cultural songs were beginning to appear in denominational hymn collections. The Vatican II Council of the Catholic Church in the mid-1960s lifted the ban on the exclusive use of Latin in worship and encouraged vernacular styles of music. In our new Mennonite hymnal we managed to include only six Asian hymns in the short time we had before publication. African hymns seemed either too difficult or too oversimplified for Western use.

### A sabbatical that changed everything

For this sabbatical leave (1972–73), I determined to study African music and arts, primarily to enrich the related music and visual arts course I taught throughout my career.

Most mission hymns that I had heard seemed so Western that I paid little attention to them. Only gradually did I realize that the changes Africans made to these songs—with additions, omissions and various other alterations—actually revealed a great deal about what they loved in their own oral music traditions.

I set out to record on cassette tape African traditional songs and instruments but soon felt I was simply taking something away from the musicians who helped me. Kwabena Nketia, a fine musician, scholar and professor at the University of Legon in Ghana, suggested that I study a few instruments, and he found teachers to help me do so. I learned immediately that I needed a printed page of music to study an instrument, that music comes to me first through the eyes and then the ears. I was introduced suddenly into the oral world—a reality vastly different from the literate one.

The instruments—especially the one-stringed fiddle and African thumb instrument, both known by many names across the continent—I would have called "primitive" until I saw what my teachers did with them. And my "perfect pitch" was useless in trying to capture the tonalities they produced.

The whole experience was both discouraging and enlightening for me. I have a distinct memory of practicing my one-stringed fiddle as I waited outside the locked door of my instructor's room. A Ghanaian woman on her way to market with a large gourd of peanuts on her head stopped to watch me. We could not speak, but after many minutes she reached for a handful of peanuts and handed them to me. It was another epiphany. The sounds I made certainly could not have interested her, but she must have been astonished that this person, both woman and white, would care to play a musical instrument from her culture.

Only gradually did I realize that the changes Africans made to mission hymns actually revealed a great deal about what they loved in their own oral music traditions.

### Focusing on differences is the most fruitful

As I studied African music, I gradually concluded that, rather than focusing on those similar qualities between African and Western musical forms and traditions, the differences were more fruitful for understanding and using music specifically in worship. In African hymns, for example, the frequent repetitions of both words and music contrast sharply with the "wordiness" of Western hymns, inviting improvised changes and encouraging dance. (It is noteworthy, for example, that ngoma—the word for music in the Swahili language—also means "drum" or "dance.") The persistent downward motion of a melodic line in Africa differs from a more arched shape in Western melody. Rhythmic vitality is far more important in Africa than harmonic richness and subsequent loss of rhythmic energy in the West. Musical form in Africa is often cyclical with no clear beginning, middle and end; Western music, in contrast, tends to be structured around high and low points of intensity with clear parameters.

None of these ideas are absolute, I have learned, but recognizing the tendencies greatly enriches my musical life. We humans, created in God's image, are "fearfully and wonderfully made." And God opens ways for us of experiencing the worship music of other cultures and sharing our own, thus leading to justice, joy and praise.

*Mary K. Oyer is music professor emerita at Goshen (Ind.) College and a member at College Mennonite Church in Goshen. This article is excerpted from* Worship and Mission for the Global Church *(William Carey Library Publishers, 2013).*

This is the fourth and last of a Bible study series by different authors on the key Scripture texts for Mennonite Church USA's next biennial convention, to be held July 1-6 in Phoenix. The convention's Scripture texts are Psalm 24:1, Philippians 3:20-21, Romans 5:1-5 and Ephesians 2:14-22. See www.mennoniteusa.org/convention.

**PHOENIX 2013**

**CITIZENS**
of God's Kingdom
HEALED IN HOPE

### A reflection on Ephesians 2:14-22

# An **unearned** citizenship

by Laura Glass-Hess

I live in Phoenix, where the daily reminders of group divisions are plainly evident. The everyday realities of life in a border region represent the fears of the majority. The day laborers in the Home Depot parking lot—young and not-so-young men dressed in jeans and boots—represent a fear of a flood of uneducated, desperate workers driving down wages. The storefront signs written in Spanish represent a fear that our country will be divided by people who refuse to assimilate. The young mother arrested for driving a vehicle with a hidden compartment full of methamphetamine represents the fear that people fleeing poverty will bring violence and crime with them. Angry voices on both sides of the immigration debate exacerbate perceived differences into emotionally charged and intractable positions.

Paul wrote Ephesians to a church that was often deeply divided between Jews and Gentiles. Jews saw themselves as the chosen people and lived by strict purity laws and a cultural tradition shaped by oppression and separation from the dominant society. Gentiles—called "outsiders" and "heathens" by the Jews (verse 11)—did not follow ritual purity laws and did not share the Jews' cultural background. Jews feared that Gentiles would corrupt their way of life, taint their religious purity and destroy their culture—just as some Arizonans fear that those from the south will overwhelm their schools, endanger their way of life and harm the economy. The Ephesians passage speaks of a "dividing wall of hostility" between groups—a hostility based on differences. Christ came to break down that barrier—to create something new that both groups could belong to, free of the baggage that makes the "majority" suspicious and resentful of the "other."

On a trip to Mexico a few years ago, I met a couple who lived in Mexico City. He was from Germany, and she was from Spain. They had decided to live in Mexico because it was something new for both of them. They wanted to start something new in a place where neither of them had a history, where neither was completely comfortable or had a cultural advantage. I was struck by the wisdom and courage of that decision. It required them to leave places where they fit and were comfortable and sure of themselves—with only the faith that together they could create something new.

**The new life we are called to in Christ** is like that. Christ calls us to leave the cultural norms we are comfortable with and to go to a new place—a place where we will meet others who challenge our ideas of what everyday life and faith should look like. This is the holy temple, occupied by the Spirit of God, filled with the members of God's household and built on Christ as the cornerstone (verses 19–22).

It may be natural—even comfortable—to separate ourselves from another group by viewing its members through the filter of our own fears. Exhaustive amounts of research have been done on the concept of "confirmation bias," the idea that we are more likely to pay attention to events and characteristics that align with our current beliefs. This bias can lead us to notice favorable attributes in our own group and negative ones in groups we distrust or dislike. It can lead us to build the "dividing wall of hostility" higher and higher.

But God's kingdom is different. God's kingdom is a place where foreigners and strangers are transformed into citizens and members of God's household. In God's kingdom, a boy (Joseph) sold by his own brothers into slavery and thrown into prison in a foreign land becomes the one who saves a nation from starvation. In God's kingdom, an impoverished widow (Ruth) goes to a country that is not her own and becomes an ancestor of the Messiah. In God's kingdom, a tax collector (Matthew) despised as scum by the religious officials becomes a disciple of Jesus. As members of God's family, we must be able to see past our fears—to see the "other" as a fellow citizen in the kingdom of God.

As members of God's family, we must be able to see past our fears—to see the "other" as a fellow citizen in the kingdom of God.

**This concept of citizenship** is worth exploring. In the United States, there are two ways to become a citizen: by birth or by an application process. The first requires no work on our part, no choice, no effort. I am a U.S. citizen, with all its privileges, rights and complexities, merely by the arbitrary fact that my mother was physically present in this country when I was born. The students to whom I teach English in my community have a different route to citizenship. They must struggle to learn a language not their own—a process that often takes years. They must be here legally for three to five years before they can even apply to be a citizen. They must submit an application and pay a fee of $680. They are fingerprinted, and their background is checked, since they have to be of "good moral character." They spend months studying and memorizing 100 questions on U.S. history and government—questions many natural-born citizens cannot answer. They must pass tests that measure their ability to read, write and speak English. If they pass the tests, they take an oath of loyalty to the United States. And after this whole process, they now have the same citizenship that cost me nothing.

It seems to me that citizenship in God's kingdom is of the unearned variety. The Gentiles, who didn't follow the laws and regulations of the Jews, were still receiving the same spiritual citizenship as the Jews—citizenship in this new place, where we all go to be transformed. The differences that

▶

divided us before we were citizens of this new kingdom are still there, but we are now given the peace to overcome them. That transformation may be painful, and the process difficult, but the right to struggle through that process as children of God, together in God's family, is freely given.

The differences that divided us before we were citizens of this new kingdom are still there, but we are now given the peace to overcome them.

And when the task of reconciliation seems hopeless—when our fears and differences and the "dividing wall of hostility" seem insurmountable—we return to the cross. There on the cross, Jesus showed us what is important. He showed us that closeness to God is not achieved by conforming to cultural norms or religious rituals but by inward peace and openness to God's leading, as together we are built into a temple filled by God's Spirit.

*Laura Glass-Hess grew up all over the place and lives in Phoenix, where she is a member of Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale, Ariz. She works as a criminal defense attorney representing indigent clients and spends her free time working on her urban farm and exploring Arizona's wild places.*

The church is to make Jesus visible in and to the world.

# Let us pray for revival

*Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee.*
—Psalm 85:6 KJV

by Myron S. Augsburger

As we get older, relationships need to be renewed. Just so in our experience of God we need the renewal of our love and joy in God's grace. I find a danger of becoming routine, even becoming presumptuous in taking God for granted in life experience. The dynamic of radiant fellowship needs to be rekindled by the Spirit, and in writing this call I am affirming that it should begin with me. My friend Bishop Lloyd Weaver and I have covenanted together to pray for revival. ►

Photo by James R. Kr

When we open our lives to Jesus we open them to all that Jesus is doing in our neighbor, our brothers and sisters.

We Mennonites have a lot of great values incorporated in our concept of discipleship, but the danger is that we focus on those values rather than on the centrality of Jesus. Just as nonconformity became central in the past, ethical concerns become central today. With this we need to reaffirm this as a nonconformity that is larger than a few symbols.

Our witness is that one cannot be a disciple of Jesus and ignore his call to walk in holiness, in peace and in reconciliation. We need to be reminded that "he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us" (Ephesians 2:14). We also need to witness to the larger church that to walk with him is to walk in his peace. It is this common faith commitment to Jesus that makes us one, walking together in a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20). As our Anabaptist forebears discovered, Christian experience is relational, "not sacramental or theological but existential" (Robert Friedman), and this relational center is our focus.

**Revival is not simply stirring emotions** or a renewal of pietistic feelings but should be a call to a renewed holistic identification with Jesus as Lord, a renewed sense of personal relationship with him with a deep sense of the mutual openness of love. This is personal, yes, but not private. When we open our lives to Jesus we open them to all that Jesus is doing in our neighbor, our broth-

# BLUFFTON
UNIVERSITY

# We can't wait to see you in Phoenix!

With Mennonite Church USA Convention approaching soon, we are busy planning here at Bluffton!

This year, Bluffton University's booth theme centers on the question, "How many ways do you want to learn in a day?" With an overarching emphasis on student and spiritual life, each day we will focus on a unique aspect of the campus community that helps shape the variety of ways our students learn.

The great group of students who will be at our booth this year include:

- **Megan Bontrager** from Goshen, Ind. (Pleasant View Mennonite)
- **Ashley Litwiller** from Hopedale, Ill. (Hopedale Mennonite)
- **Matt McCoy** from Archbold, Ohio (Zion Mennonite)
- **Laurie Nofziger** from Lyons, Ohio (West Clinton Mennonite)
- **Alicia Rodriguez** from Desert Hills, Ariz. (Trinity Mennonite)
- **Sam Stucky** from Pittsburgh, Pa. (Pittsburgh Mennonite)
- **Taylor Truex** from Goshen, Ind. (Silverwood Mennonite)

They are excited to help you learn more about Bluffton.

Back row from left: Matt McCoy, Taylor Truex, Sam Stucky
Front row from left: Megan Bontrager, Alicia Rodriguez, Laurie Nofziger, Ashley Litwiller

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The Truth Makes Free

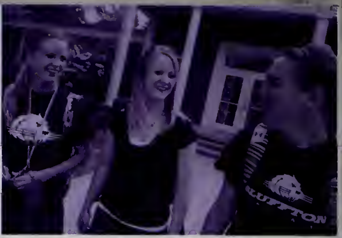
## Other activities for the week include:

- Daily T-shirt giveaways
- Life-sized Dutch Blitz Tournament; Tuesday, 9 p.m.
- Daily photo ops with our mascot, J. Denny Beaver
- Alumni and Friends Gathering; Thursday, 9:30 p.m.

They will be available all week to answer your questions, share with you why they love Bluffton, and even challenge you to a game of "Dutch Blitz"!

Visit **www.bluffton.edu/admission/phoenix/** to learn more about Bluffton University at Convention 2013, meet our students and register your life-sized Dutch Blitz team!

See you in Phoenix!



# Gingrich and Moore recognized as top senior athletes of the year

A.C. BURCKY AWARD
Male Athlete of the Year
Thomas Gingrich
2013

Bluffton University presented its top athletics awards April 16 to an Academic All-American in football and a standout in women's soccer and track and field.

Thomas Gingrich of Goshen, Ind., received the A.C. Burcky Award as senior male athlete of the year, while Maddie Moore of Linn Grove, Ind., won the Kathryn E. Little Award as outstanding senior female athlete. Both student-athletes majored in biology and pre-medicine and graduated May 5.

Gingrich, who has a 3.89 grade point average, was named second-team Academic All-American last fall by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA). He became the first Bluffton football player to be honored as an Academic All-American in the 91-year history of the program, and the third Bluffton athlete to be so recognized in any sport.

As a junior, Gingrich received first-team Academic All-District honors—a first for Bluffton football since 2002. In addition, the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference (HCAC) named him Academic All-Conference three times—the maximum number of years the award may be earned. He was president of the Science Club and a tutor and lab assistant in the science department on campus.

A four-year starter on the field, Gingrich was a first-team All-HCAC offensive lineman in 2012 while helping the football team to a 5-3 conference record and an overall mark of 6-4—Bluffton's best since 2000. The Beavers' 10 conference wins over the last two years are the most in a two-year period since Bluffton joined the HCAC in 1998.

The 2012 team's offense was Bluffton's best in rushing since 2005, in passing since 2000 and in yards per game since 2003.

"We would have not been able to make the strides we made without Thomas," said head football coach Tyson Veidt. "It will be exciting to see what the future holds for Thomas because he is a guy who is superb at everything he does."

Gingrich is the son of Jud and Rita Gingrich and a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen.

The Burcky Award is named for the late professor of physical education and coach who served Bluffton from 1922-68. He was inducted into the NAIA Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962 and, in 1970, the A.C. Burcky addition to Founders Hall was dedicated in his honor. Burcky died in 1989 at age 93.

The Little Award is based on scholarship, academic abilities and campus leadership, as well as four years of participation in at least one sport. Moore, this year's recipient, went above and beyond.

On the soccer field, she was a four-year starter who set a Bluffton career record for games played, with 67. She ranks third in assists, fourth in points and fifth in goals in school history. She was an all-conference selection all four years and a first-team pick as a senior, when she was also Bluffton's team captain. She earned the HCAC Sportsmanship Award in 2011.

*Continued on page 4*

# Diller wins statewide service award

The Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges has recognized Bluffton University junior Jena Diller for her volunteer work for diabetes awareness and other causes with its 2013 Service-Learning Leadership Award.

Diller, a marketing and communication major at Bluffton, received the award during the foundation's "Evening of Excellence" April 10 in Columbus.

The sister of two siblings with Type 1 diabetes, Diller began promoting awareness of the disease by volunteering at health fairs with her mother, a certified diabetes educator. She has continued to do so through high school and college, testing fairgoers' blood sugar levels and providing information to help build public knowledge about diabetes and prevention efforts.

Last November, she planned and coordinated a walk for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Within two weeks, participants in 10 states walked more than 5.5 million steps, or about 2,290 miles. Walking more than 600 of those miles were campus community members at Bluffton, where Diller organized a 10-hour walk Nov. 7 in the university's newly opened Sommer Center for Health and Fitness Education.

More than one-third of Bluffton students, faculty and staff participated in the walk. Among them was President James Harder, who, in a letter recommending Diller for the statewide award, wrote that "I can attest to Jena's positive impact on our campus community, including raising our awareness of juvenile diabetes and contributing to our personal fitness."

***"I can attest to Jena's positive impact on our campus community, including raising our awareness of juvenile diabetes and contributing to our personal fitness."***

**Bluffton University President Dr. James M. Harder presents the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges' service-learning award to Jena Diller on April 10.**

In addition to her work for diabetes research, Diller developed "The Color of Christmas," a December 2011 project aimed at providing art and coloring items to children's hospitals and pediatric clinics at Christmas. With the help of Columbus Grove (Ohio) High School—her alma mater—and its student council members, she was able to distribute more than 700 items to hospitalized children.

She has also volunteered for the American Diabetes Association, as well as for Big Brothers Big Sisters, the American Cancer Society Relay for Life and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. And she continued to advocate for her favorite cause, diabetes awareness, while serving as Miss Ohio Teen 2011 and National American Miss Teen 2011-12.

"During that year, she maintained a full academic schedule as she fulfilled her leadership responsibilities on behalf of a national program and used her platform to build awareness and support for juvenile diabetes research across the country," Harder wrote.

This summer, he added, Diller plans to complete a marketing internship with a health care organization "so that she can explore possibilities for connecting her academic studies with her passion for improving health and serving those in need."

## Top senior athletes...*from page 2*

Turning to the track, Moore was a member of the women's distance medley relay team that, during the 2011-12 indoor season, reset the school record three times and won the conference championship in meet-record time. In addition, she set three individual school records that season, in the 1000 meters, the mile and the 3000 meters.

Her soccer coach, Rick Nussbaum, called Moore's collegiate career "a testament to her dedication to the team, her school and the game. Her consistency will be greatly missed, but her resiliency will continue to inspire for years to come."

"It has been a pleasure coaching Maddie to track successes; it has been an equal pleasure getting to know this wonderful young woman," added her track coach, Karen Brandt. "I admire her drive and determination to be an outstanding student as well as a two-sport athlete."

Moore, the daughter of Mark and Myra Moore, was a member of the Science Club and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She attends First Missionary church in Berne, Ind.

Her award is named for Kathryn Little, who served in Bluffton's health, physical education and recreation department and in athletics from 1958-74. She was a member of the first class inducted into the Bluffton Athletics Hall of Fame, also in 1974.

## Journalism students manage *Phoenix Flyer* at convention

Bluffton journalism students, faculty and alumni will serve the church during the week by providing stories and photos for the *Phoenix Flyer*, the daily news sheet.

The team includes, from left: Karen Bontrager, '04; Donald Isaac, a junior from Dayton, Ohio; Kerry Bush, a junior from Bluffton, Ohio; Chay Reigle, a junior from Ottawa, Ohio; Dr. Zachary Walton, '02, an assistant professor of communication; and Kate Ellis, a senior from Elida, Ohio.

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Bluffton's mission...to prepare all students for life, vocation, responsible citizenship and ultimately for the purposes of God's universal kingdom.

Bluffton faculty, staff and students aspire to carry out this mission through discovery, community, respect and service – including service to the church.

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ers and sisters, and this allows the Spirit to quicken a fellowship of grace as a "community in the Spirit." This is a quality community created by the Spirit and not a mere social form of ethnicity or religious demands. Such a community will open itself to people who are different from us but who share the same commitment to Jesus.

In our day, the confrontation between various religions is a challenge for the Christian church to be clear about what it means for us to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, Christendom is so divided as to fail to give a clear witness of a common commitment to Jesus. We tend to elevate our various interpretations, and in so doing we minimize the quest to understand Jesus better. One has said that in the Christian church we have dogma, doctrines and applications. Dogma is the universal expression of Jesus as Son of God, Savior (1 Corinthians 15:3-5), doctrines are the various interpretations of the dogma, and these interpretations account for denominations, and applications are the attempts of various groups to relate their faith to life practice. The danger is that groups elevate application to the level of dogma and in doing so eclipse the gospel by patterns of religious order and fail to witness to the person of Jesus. We should join Paul when he writes, "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

**The revival we need** is a renewal of our faith commitment to Jesus and a celebration of his "finished work" in reconciling us to the Father. This renewal will be a spirit of rejoicing in the assurance of our salvation, that we are given a new birth "into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:3-5a).

Such joy will be contagious, and such common focus on Jesus will be an enriched community of the Spirit that reaches out to those around us. And such vitality in our commitment to Jesus will call the next generation to a meaningful faith and not merely to a religious tradition. Revival is a firsthand experience of relationship with the Lord.

Revival calls for a repentant spirit, repentance from sin as perversions of the good but above all repentance for failing to engage the fullness of Christ. Revival calls for a new obedience to the Word of God, and this means a renewed focus on biblical preaching and not simply essays on the psychology of religion and life. Revival calls for an authentic openness to the Spirit and to God's work of disclosing Christ within and through us. And a genuine revival will express a spirit of love for others and be a witness to the assurance of his grace.

As Billy Graham commented, churches have become so institutional and defensive of their own programs that it has now become difficult to have a communitywide mission. I have found this to be the case and pray that we may become more interested in a strategy of communication that engages the larger community.

Revival calls for a repentant spirit, repentance from sin as perversions of the good but above all repentance for failing to engage the fullness of Christ.

While much can be done by the congregation and by one-on-one sharing, I have found that often people not engaged in the church will come to a communitywide meeting either by the common interest or sometimes even because they can maintain a degree of anonymity while hearing the gospel. A genuine revival in a congregation can become contagious and spill over to friends and neighbors through the spirit of the members.

These are a few thoughts on revival, but the reality is more than I can verbalize. I have been blessed often by revival meetings, but at my age I must ask whether these memories mean that such an experience is a piety of the past more than a fresh moving of the Spirit. We don't work up a revival; we rather pray it down. It is a gift of God, a sovereign moving of God's Spirit.

I pray for such a revival and that it come in some contemporary form that honors Jesus, and I call on the extended membership of the church to join me. We together are God's church, the body of Christ, and as such we are made alive in the Spirit.

Remember, just as the body makes one personality visible, so the church as the body of Christ means that we make Jesus visible in and to the world.

*Myron S. Augsburger is an evangelist in Harrisonburg, Va.*

# God at work through the little things

**Kent Miller** Middlebury, Ind., is denominational minister of youth and young adults for Mennonite Church USA.

**Alan Stucky** is pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kan.

During a regional gathering of the Mennonite Camping Association, Alan Stucky, pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kan., shared about how God can work in people's lives through simple conversations—even those that might seem insignificant—and through caring people following up on such conversations.

I asked Alan to recount the story as a reminder to all of us that it is often in the little events of life that God does the most amazing work.

*Many times we don't get to see the fruit of the seeds we plant in the work of ministry. But sometimes we do. Such was the case when my friend Brett sent me a letter he had received from a young woman.*

Let us view every encounter—whether it seems significant or ordinary—as an opportunity to enter into the work God is about all around us.

*In the summers of 2005 through 2007, I had the great opportunity to volunteer as the Bible lesson leader for a week of junior high camp at Camp Mennoscah near Murdock, Kan. One of the directors I worked with was Brett, another youth pastor whom I'd known for years.*

*During the week, we had opportunities to minister to all kinds of kids dealing with all kinds of issues. I know for a fact that we had a significant impact on a number of the kids. Others we simply had to turn over to the trust and care of God, hoping the Holy Spirit was at work in their lives. Rebecca was one of those girls.*

*One night after campfire, Rebecca stayed behind to pray and talk with one of the adults. She wound up talking with Brett. At one point, Brett asked her what she thought God was calling her to do. She said she didn't know and that she didn't even go to church. Brett said, "You know that God loves you even if you don't go to church, right?" He then asked if she had a friend she might feel comfortable going to church with. She said, "Yes, there's Megan."*

*After the conversation that evening, Rebecca felt as though God was calling her to start going to church, but she wasn't totally sure. After going home from camp, she didn't quite know what to do and began to question whether or not she was supposed to go to church. Then, out of the blue, Megan's mom called and invited her to go to church with their family. Rebecca couldn't believe God was actually calling her to do what she'd talked about at camp.*

*She attended church that year and returned to camp the next summer, excited to tell Brett what had happened. When she told him that Megan's mom had called and about how she had started going to church, Brett said, "Yeah, I know. I called the pastor of that church after camp last year and told her about you." Rebecca was almost in shock that someone would care enough about her to do that for her. It was confirmation that God was working in her life.*

*Rebecca attended church throughout high school and then attended Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. As she made plans for the summer after her first year, she actively pursued a job as a summer staff person at a Mennonite camp. She was offered such a position at Swan Lake Christian Camp in Viborg, S.D., which she had learned about while visiting a friend in South Dakota that year. Once again, God was at work.*

*While that summer presented its challenges, Rebecca also had a profoundly moving experience, again during campfire. After returning home, she decided to go through catechism, be baptized and join the church. As part of the catechism class, she was to write a letter to someone who had made a difference in her faith. She chose Brett. It was in that letter that she shared the story of her faith journey—a journey that had begun that night with a simple conversation after campfire.*

Everyone has simple conversations every day. How often do we remember that God uses these conversations to be about building up and encouraging people in their faith? I hope Brett's example of listening and follow-through inspires us to view every encounter—whether it seems significant or ordinary—as an opportunity to enter into the work God is about all around us.

# Deed and word

An interesting dichotomy has been argued in Christian mission. Should the Christian's mission in the world focus on verbal witness, or should acts of care and compassion be our priority? Word or deed, evangelism or service, gospel or peace?

I answer the questions with a resounding, "Yes. Both." Jesus illustrated a seamless concern for people's hearts, bodies and relationships, and the early church understood Jesus' intentions to embrace all human need and humanity in its entirety. No longer could any credible argument be made for separating either Jew from Greek or separating word from deed. We are a seamless whole, and God cares for all humanity. That is God's mission. We participate in many ways.

> Jesus illustrated a seamless concern for people's hearts, bodies and relationships, and the early church understood Jesus' intentions to embrace all human need and humanity in its entirety.

**Why then does the debate continue?** I suspect two reasons. First, Christian mission and evangelism have at times been patronizing and condescending. The mission thrust of the church has not always been carried out with sensitivity and has sometimes been linked to cultural pride and violent power.

Sadly this is true, although it is not immediately apparent why this is often cited as an argument against verbal witness but seldom against compassionate service. Well meaning deeds can be as patronizing as ill-spoken words and one's actions can be as dangerous as one's speech—maybe more so.

Still the fact of the Crusades looms as a horrible example of "Christian" motives gone awry. We continue to live in their wake. Frank admission of failures is a proper chastening of the mission endeavor.

I think there is a second reason, too. I suspect that Christians not only question the method of Christian mission but sometimes even wonder whether it is necessary at all. The message, not simply the method, is thought to be a condescending carryover from an imperialistic and colonizing past.

In an increasingly interconnected world, it is more difficult to talk about convictions from one perspective without appearing blind or insensitive to the contributions of others. Hence we feel called to give priority to actions and efforts that receive praise from a variety of faith perspectives. Giving voice to conviction expresses mere personal opinion and polarizes people. Even worse, inviting others to share one's faith experience appears not as humble generosity but as downright arrogance.

**I often hear a presumed quote** of Saint Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel and when necessary use words." Apart from the question of whether Saint Francis actually said it, I really do like that statement. And I also like Saint Francis' example.

On the heels of the Crusades and the debris of human conflict, Francis articulated and practiced simplicity, joy and love as the motives that would form his life and the character that would define his witness, even to the Muslim world. His compassion led him in the year 1219 into the very presence of the Sultan of Egypt, where he attempted to share the gospel, using words. His mission held together deed and word.

Some years ago the words "integrated witness" came into my vocabulary. They replaced the earlier language of "holism," itself introduced as an antidote to a perceived bias of words over deeds. In the current climate, the danger of prioritizing words over deeds is now matched with the danger of prioritizing deeds over words. And further, holism, introduced to bring balance to the witness of deeds and words, has sometimes become a euphemism for deeds without words.

I believe in an integrated witness that values deed and word, peace and witness, justice and evangelism. The hues of truly Christian and godly engagement in the world are reflected through the various facets of an integrated witness.

**Loren Horst** is president of Virginia Mennonite Missions.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Gathering for those not attending Phoenix 2013

## Iglesia Menonita Hispana organizes event in Fort Myers, Fla., with 120 attending.

Rafael Barahona

Three leaders hold quilt squares that were created for display on an empty chair that will be on stage at the Phoenix convention in July. The empty chair will represent undocumented members of Mennonite Church USA and their allies who will not participate in the Arizona convention. From left: Juanita Nuñez, former moderator of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, Samuel Lopez, current IMH moderator, and Madeline Maldonado, incoming chair of the Mennonite Mission Network board of directors.

On May 3-4 and less than one week after the dedication of its new building, Arca de Salvación church in Fort Myers, Fla., hosted an event called "Celebrando la Inmigración" (Celebrating Immigration). The event was organized by the Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church).

The main reason for the two days of celebration was to gather the IMH congregations that resolved not to be present at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix in July due to the sustained persecution of immigrants by the state of Arizona.

**The event drew more than 120 people from several states** and representatives from churchwide groups, including Mennonite Mission Network, Executive Board, Mennonite Education Agency, Mennonite Historical Society, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Christian Peacemakers Teams. Some of them provided presentations focusing on the life of the immigrants, their participation and contributions to society and the Mennonite Church USA congregations to which they belong.

On May 3, at the beginning of the program and after a welcome from David Maldonado, the local pastor and participants were led in worship by the local musicians. The altar was festooned with flags of the nations represented and crafts characteristic of each country of origin.

Andrew Bodden of MCC presented two true stories of immigrants to the United States in search of better horizons—like those who came from Europe in the past.

Then Gilberto Flores, associate conference minister of Western District Conference, recounted several cases of immigrants who found expressions of Christian love and cordial welcome in many of our Mennonite congregations on this side of the border.

Later, Saulo Padilla, director for MCC immigration education, recounted his story and challenged the audience not to be silent but "tell your story to your children and grandchildren." This was to avoid situations that most European descendants are in now: They do not know their own stories. Then several participants were able to relate some of their stories, including comical circumstances and anecdotes that occur to many entering a new culture.

Based on the story of Exodus, Juanita Nuñez and Gilberto Flores presented, "From Immigrants to Pilgrims," an analysis of the dynamics that govern the displacement of people at migration.

Stanley Green, Mennonite Mission Network's executive director, presented the theme, "Immigration and Food: Building a Potluck of Justice, Diversity and Belonging." Green talked about the stereotypes of food used to denigrate immigrants. With the passing of time, he said, such food is preferred and even adopted as national food.

**May 4 brought the rich ethnic tradition** of the Garifunas through worship and praise in three languages: Garifuna, Spanish and English. The audience was led in worship by the Garifuna musical group.

Rolando Santiago, executive director of the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society, shared about Anabaptist migration to many places in the world, analyzing the many factors that operate in the act of peoples and communities migrating. Finally, Samuel Lopez presented "A Pilgrim's Prayer," an enlightening piece written by Carlos Mestes. He also conducted the group in a reflection and response to the document.

*—Rafael Barahona, a joint release of* The Mennonite, *Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and Mennonite Education Agency*

# Women in Leadership Project gathers momentum

## Subgroups focus on mentoring, monologues, undoing sexism.

Mennonite Church USA's Women in Leadership Project (WLP), whose goal is to address the systemic obstacles that stand in the way of women becoming church leaders, continues to generate interest and gather support from across the country.

"We are blessed to be joined by many who are committed to volunteering their time in order to move this work forward," says Joanna Shenk, who coordinates the project with Hilary Scarsella. Shenk and Scarsella are Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff members.

In addition to coordinating four focus groups—one each on mentoring, monologues, empowering resources, and undoing sexism—WLP staff members are leading several other initiatives, from a Women in Leadership blog on Mennonite Church USA's website to a "Women Doing Theology" conference slated for early 2014. There are plans to create an online tool that will help interested congregations and church agencies locate people in their areas who can provide education and services to address domestic violence and abuse.

**At the churchwide convention** to be held July 1–6 in Phoenix, the WLP will host a learning experience, Undoing Sexism through Storytelling, and a seminar, Circles of Solidarity: Creating Mentoring Networks for Women. An exhibit highlighting 100 years of Mennonite women's history in the United States also will be on display.

The WLP began in August 2009. During the project's first two years, Shenk conducted an audit of Mennonite organizations related to numbers of women in leadership, worked with a short-term steering committee, presented findings of the audit to the denomination's Executive Board and Constituency Leaders Council, hosted a gathering of 30 women leaders in Goshen, Ind., and led a workshop with Scarsella at a Mennonite Women USA "Women in Conversation" retreat in Hesston, Kan. She also coordinated a seminar and reception in July 2011 at the denominational convention in Pittsburgh.

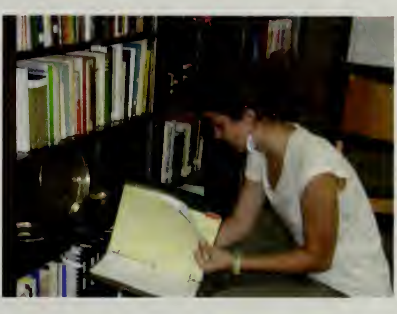
"The conversation at Pittsburgh 2011 resonated with feedback from other gatherings that had happened across the country," she says.

In the months that followed, additional gatherings were held in Greeley, Colo., and Newton, Kan. The needs and goals identified at all these gatherings were shaped into the four focus groups described above. A new steering committee was formed in August 2012 to provide vision for and feedback on each part of the project.

"Recognizing that no one form of oppression exists on its own, this steering committee is tasked with holding the Women in Leadership Project accountable to an approach that understands that the need for undoing sexism intersects with needs for undoing racism and all other 'isms,' " Scarsella says.

**The Mentoring focus group is working** to create a network of support and development for women leaders across the church, focusing specifically on theological leadership, pastoral leadership, institutional leadership and conference leadership.

The Monologues focus group strives to create a safe space for women to tell their stories of struggle and hope related to being in leadership in the Mennonite church. The group is launching a website where women's stories will be collected and shared for one year; the group will then select some of the stories to appear in a book.



Joanna Shenk

Emily Kraybill of Goshen (Ind.) College served the Women in Leadership Project as a Ministry Inquiry Program intern in the summer of 2012.

"I believe that the Mennonite Monologues will give voice to women's stories that have never had a public space to be shared," says Rachel Halder, a member of the group.

**The Empowering Resources focus group** is developing a worship series intended to help not only women and girls but entire congregations address the need for undoing sexism in both personal and congregational settings. The worship resources will take into account women's stories and experiences in the Bible and today.

"We believe that worship with this emphasis offers the whole church an opportunity to experience God more fully and deeply," Scarsella says. "It forms women and girls to believe they are worthy of being called as leaders."

The Undoing Sexism focus group is tasked with generating conversation about naming and transforming systemic sexism in Mennonite Church USA. With careful attention to the broad range of needs across the denomination regarding this subject, this group is creating a document that seeks to explain the need for attention to be given to systemic sexism in the life of the church. The group is also working toward creating a website to offer resources to support Mennonite secondary education teachers of all subjects in providing antisexist and antiracist education.
*—Mennonite Church USA staff*

# Detroit Mennonite runs largest urban farm

## Mike Score faces challenges in balancing competing interests in struggling city.

When Mike Score stood on a street corner by a vacant lot in Detroit, he felt a nudge from God to consider urban farming. That was 10 years ago. Score now works as president of Hantz Woodlands, a large-scale tree farm and subsidiary of Hantz Farms, located near that very same street corner.

Score was born on the east side of Detroit and says he grew up as a "city kid." He went to Michigan State University in East Lansing to study crop and soil science, and there he met Mary, his wife. Together, they completed a four-year Mennonite Central Committee term in the Democratic Republic of Congo, followed by time serving in Kentucky.

After these eclectic experiences, he hoped to return home to contribute his skills.

"I had a 30-year career in agriculture, but my hometown was Detroit," he says. "It seemed like an oxymoron."

However, he moved back to Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1997 and began working for Michigan State University. During this time he also helped write business plans for food and agriculture ventures. In 2003, he received a call from someone who wanted to reopen a farmers' market in Detroit near where Score's grandparents lived when they emigrated from Poland to Detroit.

Mike Score

"[That area] was a classic train wreck," says Score, a member of Ann Arbor (Mich.) Mennonite Church. "Heroin and crack came in the '70s. It was crime ridden and blighted."

Score also worked with a church group that helped formerly homeless individuals and former addicts with gardening projects. "I watched people tend their plants, make money and then get back on drugs," he says. "It was really heartbreaking."

The efforts were small scale and kept failing. When Score felt most frustrated, he went on a prayer walk. At a street corner he heard God say, "Mike, you need to work with people where they're at and with what they have."

**In 2008, Score's boss from Michigan State** connected him to John Hantz, a businessman in Detroit who wanted to start an urban farm business venture. That year, Score went to meet with one of Hantz' employees. During the meeting, the employee showed a map of where the urban farm would begin. It was the exact same street corner Score prayed at years earlier. Score was hired.

Hantz Woodlands is an enterprise of the Hantz Farms Detroit. It launched in 2009 and has plans to purchase more than 200 acres of vacant land from the city of Detroit and plant hardwood tree farms in those areas. Hantz Woodlands will maintain the properties, pay taxes to the city, beautify the area and hopefully create some new jobs down the road. Score has been president for four years.

**Despite the divine timing for Score**, the work of Hantz Woodlands faces challenges. For example, residents near the vacant lots have strongly questioned why the city of Detroit would sell to Hantz and not to them.

According to Score, the city council wanted to keep the land public, with hopes that a "big economic development venture" would emerge, but that never happened. They wanted to believe that the city was on the "upswing economically" and were blind to other options.

"Frankly, we agreed with the community members on this point," he says. "The city should have never done what they did."

The city owns over one-third of the land through foreclosures and does not receive property taxes from that land. At a public hearing in December 2012, 125 residents spoke against Hantz and nine in favor. However, the city council still voted 5-4 in favor of the venture. Score says their attorney asked two of the members who voted for Hantz Farms why they voted that way.

"The council members said the tactics used [against us] were so unpleasant that they couldn't bring themselves to vote for our opponents," Score says. "Our project had merit. If the council had voted against us, they would have had to work with our opponents."

***The Mennonite* staff contacted** the city clerk on May 13 for the minutes but never received them. "People are frustrated that the city denied their requests to buy [the lots], and now they are selling to Woodlands," says Score.

Score works to educate residents that his contract with the city includes a stipulation that before Hantz can purchase the land, the residents have the opportunity to buy lots adjacent to their properties for a lower price than Hantz would pay. "We can empathize," Score says, "but on the other hand, it was our effort that moved the city … to sell vacant parcels to community residents."

Score remains committed to community involvement. If the neighbors of the Woodlands affirm the work, Woodlands will work to purchase 150 more acres. One of the end goals is job creation.

"In the future, hopefully, neighbors will want crops that will create more jobs," says Score. "We're willing to let our neighbors take the lead in terms of what we plant and grow."—*Anna Groff*

# Model lands Amish romance book cover

## DeBerg attends Emmanuel Mennonite in Minneapolis, edits *Timbrel.*

How does a Mennonite woman end up an "Amish" model featured on the refreshed cover of an Amish romance novel?

For Claire DeBerg, a model and a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, it just came together.

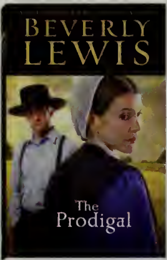
In 2009, a modeling agent approached her at a wedding and asked, "What's your ethnicity?" DeBerg, who is Cherokee, says she is asked this question a lot.

The agent was looking for "ethnically vague models" and thought DeBerg fit the bill.

DeBerg could not find a reason not to try modeling, so she agreed to get some headshots taken and have the agency represent her.

Almost immediately, she landed a job for a commercial for Target, which is headquartered in Minneapolis.

Some auditions involve speaking a few lines, others involve only a few photos. For Target, DeBerg had to laugh on cue, which she also did in the commercial shoot.



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**The commercial aired on the Red Channel,** Target's in-store channel. In fact, her parents went to a Target in Kentucky and saw the commercial airing in the television sales section of the store.

But DeBerg's modeling did not end with Target.

In August 2012, DeBerg received an email from her agent asking for four photos: one front view with her hair down, one with her hair up and both profiles.

She landed the job and later found out the audition was for Bethany Publishing House, also located in Minneapolis. A reshoot was planned for a new cover of Beverly Lewis' novel *The Prodigal*, book four in the Abram's Daughters Amish romance series originally published in 2004.

DeBerg says Bethany Publishing House likely wanted the new cover to feature a woman instead of just an Amish man, like the first cover, since books with women on the covers tend to sell better.

Claire DeBerg

The photo shoot took two hours and produced more than 800 photos, which surprised her. The photographer specializes in shooting the images for Amish book covers.

"He takes his work very seriously and has actual Amish clothes made by the Amish," DeBerg says. "He rents the head coverings to movie sets needing authentic Amish clothes and was very distraught when a covering was returned to him quite crushed. Each bonnet is stored alone in its own container."

The makeup artist was a young, trendy woman who considered herself an expert in Amish makeup and hairstyles. She styled DeBerg's hair into the traditional rolled sides and bun in the back.

During the shoot, DeBerg talked with the crew, sharing with them that she is Mennonite, and explained the differences between Amish and Mennonites. The crew asked her many questions about her life and faith.

**They were shocked** when she said there are three Mennonite churches in the Twin Cities. DeBerg joined Emmanuel Mennonite in 2001.

She did not grow up Mennonite but came to know them through her sister, Jennifer Davis Sensenig, who did a year of service in Manitoba with Mennonite Voluntary Service and later went to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

DeBerg has modeled for Walgreen's, a Rapala commercial, H&R Block and various other print ads. She continues to audition; however, her attitude remains light and noncompetitive.

"For me, [modeling is] fun and pays well. When I don't get a part, I'm OK with it," she says. "Modeling is not my career path … if it was, I'd be living in L.A. or New York, not Minneapolis."

DeBerg says jokingly that she is trying to get other Mennonites to model.

Her agent asked her if she knew an Asian woman in her 50s or 60s. DeBerg immediately thought of Kim Vu Friesen from her congregation. Friesen is a former Mennonite Church USA Executive Board member.

**Friesen auditioned for the Walgreen's** commercial and landed the job. However, when she arrived for the shoot, the crew thought she looked too young, so they applied makeup to age her.

DeBerg has also gotten her family into the modeling world. Her 10-year-old daughter, Gloria, who has actually gotten more work than DeBerg, was in a Target commercial that aired during the 2012 summer Olympics.

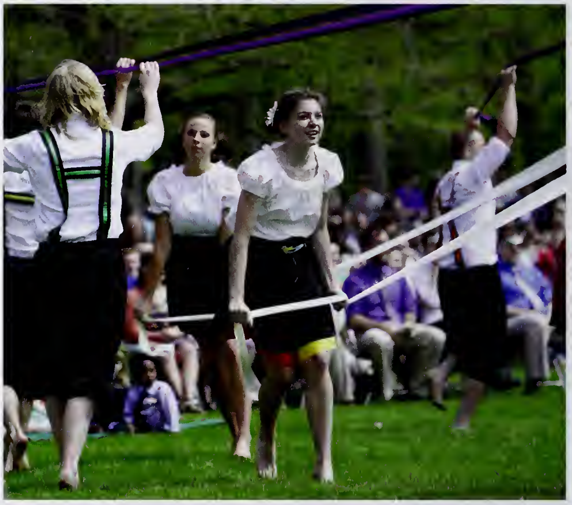
Her husband also got a job modeling for a Medtronic print ad.

In addition to work as a model, DeBerg began as editor of *Timbrel*, the Mennonite Women USA publication, in January. She is a graduate of Bethel University, St. Paul, Minn., and of the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.—*Anna Groff*

# Colleges, seminary graduate 1,238 students

## Speakers include former professor, seminary president, nonprofit exec.

Photo provided



Abigail Graber (center, with red and yellow trim) was part of a 'legacy' couple added to Bluffton University's traditional Maypole dance for May Day festivities on May 4.

### Bluffton (Ohio) University

**279, May 5**

Minutes away from becoming Bluffton University graduates on May 5, 279 students were reminded that they have another test.

"That test is called 'the rest of your life,'" said J. Denny Weaver, a professor emeritus of religion at Bluffton and the speaker at the university's 113th annual commencement ceremony.

The test is "how well you invest the education you have acquired," he said, urging the graduates to do so by helping bend the moral arc that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said is long but "bends toward justice."

"King is telling us that progress toward justice may seem slow, but we should keep working away at it," said Weaver, a noted Mennonite theologian who retired in 2006 after 31 years at Bluffton. "Use your Bluffton University education to bend that arc toward justice."

"Injustice comes in many forms," he said, citing income inequality—"fostered by economic and tax policies that keep the poor poor while allowing the rich to get even richer"—as well as discrimination of various types.

"Our world needs people who are willing to confront these injustices and take risks for peace," added Weaver, also an author and editor who has written extensively about nonviolence and religion.—*Bluffton University*

### Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

**24 graduates, April 27**

In 2005, Nathaniel Daniel had lost everything. He was jobless, homeless, addicted to drugs and involved in criminal activity. His wife had left him, taking their three children with her. This year he will graduate from Eastern Mennonite Seminary with dual degrees: a master of divinity and master of arts in conflict transformation.

"We are never beyond God's reach," says Daniel. "We are never beyond God's love. That's the message I want to take to people with addictions. My seminary degree is part of my testimony and witness to what God can do."

Daniel is planning to start a chapter of U-Turn for Christ, the program that turned his life around, in the Harrisonburg, Va., area. U-Turn for Christ is a residential drug and alcohol program for men and women who are seeking restoration from drug and alcohol addiction. It has a biblical foundation.

Daniel entered the U-Turn program in 2005 at the urging of his estranged wife, Eleni Maile. He completed several months of residential treatment and then, in phase two of the program, did six months of service helping survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Finally, Daniel was reunited with his family, and they moved together from California to Tennessee, where Daniel continued to work for a branch of U-Turn. In 2007, Daniel returned to Harrisonburg for a high school reunion at Eastern Mennonite High School.

"I realized as I was giving my family a tour of Eastern Mennonite High School and Eastern Mennonite University that I wanted my family to be a part of this community and that I wanted to study in seminary," he says. His older son, Yonaton, is now a rising sophomore at EMU. His younger children, Yosef and Asene, are students at Eastern Mennonite High School.

"The seminary has been incredibly challenging, intentional and formative for me. The people here have been able to speak into my life. They affirm who I am and also continue to stretch and pull me, preparing me for what God has called me to do."

Daniel says he added the conflict transformation degree to address the ways that addicts hurt not only themselves but those around them: "Helping people restore relationships with others is part of the healing process."

In 2010, Daniel was ordained in Mennonite Church USA. He and his family attend Lindale (Va.) Mennonite Church.

Daniel is one of 18 graduates who received degrees on April 27. Daniel and 12 others received master of divinity degrees, four received master of arts in religion degrees, and one received a master of arts in church leadership. Six received graduate certificates.

Daniel's story embodies what Lee Snyder, president emeritus of Bluffton (Ohio) University, told seminary graduates in her commencement address, titled "Reclaiming the Story."

"The biblical narrative 'is not a safe or simple story,' but then neither are our stories safe or totally comprehensible. We join a cast of unlikely heroes, scruffy characters and needy travelers on a journey of faith. Beloved of God, we are invited into a company of individuals who have experienced the Redeemer's transforming love.

"The church has a story that must be shared. It is 'Scripture's grand narrative' that allows us to abound in hope rather than wallow in despair."*—Laura Lehman Amstutz of EMS*

### Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. 497 graduates, April 28

Commencement speaker Mark Shriver said he had to battle his own ego to address the 2013 graduating class of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) about what really counts: "To perform acts of hope and love … is what matters."

"I initially accepted the invitation to speak here because it is such an honor and it felt good for my ego," he said on April 28. "I was being recognized for all of my great achievements: Should I talk about my work as a member of the Maryland legislature or what lessons I gleaned from my successful private sector experience? Maybe I should speak about writing a bestselling book and the experience of a national book tour? Surely this was my chance to speak about my thoughts, to share my pearls of wisdom.

Lindsey Kolb

Nathaniel Daniel, Eastern Mennonite Seminary graduate, celebrated his accomplishments on April 28 with his family (left to right): sons Yosef, 17, Yonaton, 19, his wife, Eleni Maile, and daughter Asene, 15.

Lindsey Kolb

From left: James Souder and Phillip Martin, EMU class of 2013, celebrate following commencement.

"But when I started to write this speech, I struggled," he said. "Those very thoughts conflicted with what [EMU] stands for and has taught each of you. Indeed, by extending the invitation, [EMU] was teaching me that what I am trying to do in my life—to serve poor kids and their families, to perform acts of hope and love—is what matters."

Mark Shriver is the author of *A Good Man: Rediscovering My Father, Sargent Shriver* (Henry Holt and Co., 2012), which describes how his father lived out his faith, hope and love in his marriage of 54 years, parenting of five children, and wide-ranging service work.

Shriver is senior vice president for strategic initiatives and senior advisor to the chief executive officer of Save the Children U.S. Programs. "By asking me to stand in front of all of you—a guy who is not a political potentate or a high-ranking legal scholar, who is not a famous best-selling author—by inviting me to speak—someone who is striving to be a pencil in God's hand—[EMU] has taught me—and I hope all of you—that what is truly important in life is to accept Jesus' invitation to love and serve each other, to commit to daily acts of hope and love."
*—Mike Zucconi and Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU*

# Mennonite schools (continued)

## Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Bethel College yet to come

### Goshen (Ind.) College
### 277 graduates, April 28

Members of Goshen College's Class of 2013 received undergraduate and graduate degrees on April 28 after being encouraged to seek God's love that surpasses knowledge, as well as true and authentic relationships.

The class of 2013 consisted of 277 graduates. At a morning baccalaureate worship service in the college's church-chapel, president James E. Brenneman delivered a sermon titled "Love in the Clouds of Unknowing," based on Ephesians 3:16-19, in which the Apostle Paul speaks of God providing "love that surpasses knowledge." At 3 p.m. Sunday, under slate-gray clouds, 138 current and retired faculty members led the graduates in a procession into the gymnasium of the Roman Gingerich Recreation-Fitness Center for the 115th Goshen College commencement.

Brenneman acknowledged the tragic loss of Millicent M. Morros, 48, who was killed on March 14 in downtown Goshen. She received a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership at Sunday's ceremony, and a moment of silence was observed on her behalf. Her classmates in the adult program wore pink roses in her honor.

The commencement speaker was Dan Charles, a food and agriculture correspondent for National Public Radio. Before working at NPR, Charles was an independent radio producer and writer, and he has contributed articles for publications including *National Geographic*, *Science* and the *Washington Post*. In his address, "Searching for What's Real in a Digital World," Charles talked about growing up in a rural Mennonite community near Lancaster, Pa., and how his life was enriched by Goshen College graduates, who have become some of his closest friends.—*Goshen College*

Jodi H. Beyeler

Goshen College graduate Emily Trapp, a music major from Canby, Ore., celebrates receiving her degree.

Larry Bartel

Destavia Davis, Nacogdoches, Texas, receives her Hesston College diploma from president Howard Keim.

### Hesston (Kan.) College
### 161 graduates, May 5

Commencement speaker J. Nelson Kraybill, president-elect of Mennonite World Conference, filled the graduates with hope for a world filled with shalom as they departed Hesston College at the May 5 ceremony.

Kraybill referenced the apostle Paul's words to the church in Ephesians 1:16-23 to encourage the graduates that there is hope in the world, and God is not silent. "I do not cease giving thanks to God for you as I remember you today in my prayers," Kraybill said. "And I pray with Paul that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you understand the hope to which God has called you, and the power of the gospel to transform lives and change the world."

Kraybill, who serves as pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., and is president emeritus of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, shared stories of forgiveness and love to show that, despite the pain and suffering in the world every day, there is hope in faith and within faith communities. He challenged the graduates to live for that shalom community and serve others boldly.—*Hesston College*

# Florida church to build a community park

**Cape Christian Fellowship is 26 years old; 1,800 attend five worship services.**

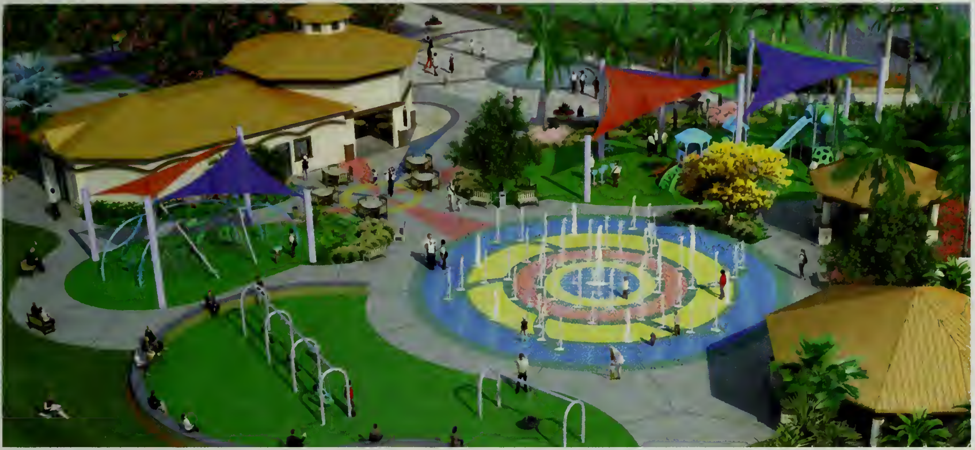


Photo provided

Rather than building a new, 1,700-seat auditorium, Cape Christian Fellowship in Cape Coral, Fla., will build Fellowship Park (artist's rendering above), build a health clinic nearby, build new churches in Haiti and launch a new campus in North Cape Coral.

Recognizing that cities are changed at home, Cape Christian Fellowship has announced plans to forego building a proposed 1,700-seat auditorium and build Fellowship Park, a community park for the city of Cape Coral, Fla. The park will be open for public use and will be funded, maintained, owned and operated by the church.

The church has doubled its membership over the past five years, and rather than pursue a traditional church building campaign, Cape Christian Fellowship initiated a Christmas offering to fund the park, the expansion of its interactive family worship experience, a health clinic nearby, new churches in Haiti and launch of a new campus in North Cape Coral. A family offered a $1 million matching gift, and others gave generously to reach a total of $1.28 million. The 100,000-square-foot park will include the city's largest splash pad, multiple playgrounds, sports and multipurpose fields, common areas, a jogging trail, covered pavilions and covered seating with a full service café.

Fellowship Park is part of a larger expansion campaign in progress. The second phase of this campaign includes the church's involvement in local schools. The final phase of the campaign involves launching a medical clinic and the Center for Family Life to provide resources to the community. The 26-year-old church is home to over 1,800 members and guests who attend their five contemporary worship services each weekend.—*Cape Christian Fellowship*

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# Welcoming stance affects church transfer request

## Atlantic Coast approves Pa. congregation's move from Lancaster Conference.

A Pennsylvania congregation hoping to transfer from one Mennonite Church USA area conference to another after expressing openness to gay members has received an invitation to associate membership.

Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) delegates on April 20 invited Frazer Mennonite Church, currently affiliated with Lancaster Mennonite Conference, to become an associate member.

The decision drew interest mainly because of a statement introducing the congregation that Frazer's pastor, Brenda Martin Hurst, read at the ACC fall assembly last October.

"Frazer wants to continue to be the welcoming, connecting and healing place that it has been for decades, without singling out a certain group of people—in this case gays—for special exclusion when they desire to be a member," she read in part.

Neither the Frazer congregation nor its leadership have come to a consensus about homosexuality, she said. But the congregation has expressed "preliminary affirmation" for a general membership statement that "welcomes into membership all persons who profess faith in Christ and all who desire to walk with Christ in order to grow and trust in God, in following the light of Scripture and in living Jesus' way," without naming or singling out gays for exclusion.

Frazer requested membership in ACC after it became clear that Lancaster Mennonite Conference would not support such a statement, Martin Hurst said.

She said the congregation was drawn to ACC because it embraces unity in Jesus Christ in the midst of diversity in belief and practice. Frazer values ACC's congregation-centered leadership structure and its commitment to Mennonite Church USA, she said.

Meeting at Conestoga Mennonite Church, ACC delegates accepted Frazer's associate membership in a narrow two-thirds majority vote—64-29, or 69 percent in favor.

"Over the next 18 months, we will continue to engage in dialogue and discernment, trusting that God's Spirit will lead and guide us. We request that delegates at the fall assembly in 2014 review Frazer's membership status," the invitation concluded.

Martin Hurst said Frazer "would have preferred to receive a clear 'yes' or 'no' to our request for full membership … rather than a partial affirmation, leaving our conference membership status uncertain for an extended period of time." But she said Frazer understood that ACC might need more time to discern.

The ACC executive committee proposed associate membership in April because of diverse responses to Frazer's request and a desire to stay together as a conference and to be faithful to Jesus and Scripture.

"Is there a way forward that respects the deeply held convictions of everyone involved in this process?" conference moderator Harry Jarrett asked. "We believe that extending to Frazer an invitation of associate membership for a period of 18 months may be that way forward."—*Lowell Brown for* Mennonite World Review, *reprinted with permission*

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# First Early Childhood Network summit

## Eight women attend three-day summit in Harleysville, Pa., in March.

Eight women, six of whom were current members of the Mennonite Early Childhood Network Council, gathered March 15-17 in the home of Linda and Vernon Martin of Harleysville, Pa., for the first summit meeting of MECN. Since 2006, members of the MECN Council have been meeting through monthly conference calls to provide information and support for parents and early educators of children, birth through kindergarten, primarily through emails to members and on its website, www.mennoniteeducation.org/mecn.

Kathryn Aschliman, MECN coordinator, and Elaine Moyer, Mennonite Education Agency senior director, planned the agenda and facilitated the event for early childhood professionals from Indiana, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The three-day summit included time to reflect on the mission statement, explore current trends in care and education of young children, and brainstorm about ways that MECN can continue to provide support for others in the early childhood field. The need for additional funding for MECN initiatives and resources was also discussed.

For a glimpse of local programs, Linda Martin provided an opportunity for attendees to visit Salford Mennonite Child Care Centers in two locations: Salford Mennonite Church and the intergenerational child-care program located in the Dock Woods Retirement Community. Linda was the director of SMCCC for nearly 20 years and is currently serving on the board.

As an initial outcome of the summit, MECN will invite responses from churches, child-care and education programs, and parents through a needs-assessment survey to learn how MECN can best serve young children through the adults who teach and care for them. Responses to the survey will clarify the needs and help determine direction for future MECN initiatives.

Louise Matthews, director of The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center of Bluffton University, led the Sunday morning worship. Reflecting on the message highlighted in the picture book *Different Just Like Me* by Lori Mitchell, she said, "We are gifted differently and have unique opportunities to be advocates for young children in direct and indirect ways through our various roles as educators and directors."
*—Louise Matthews*

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# Illegal gun trafficking the focus of MCC tours

## 1,700 people at 32 events hear traumatic stories due to illegal handguns.

Months before the mass shooting of teachers and children in Newtown, Conn., brought the issue of gun violence to national political attention yet again, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. was raising awareness about the problem of gun violence in the United States. Through MCC East Coast's work with those touched by gun violence, they knew that any gun violence caused tremendous loss and trauma, forever changing the lives of the families, friends, neighbors and communities who knew both the victim and the offender.

They also knew that many of those murders were committed with illegally trafficked handguns.

So MCC East Coast organized the Gun Violence Prevention Storytelling Tour to schools, universities, churches and small groups in the fall of 2012, and MCC Great Lakes did a similar tour this spring.

**The tours "aimed to encourage** a conversation among Jesus' followers about ways the church can bear witness to the 'Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' in the face of the 'law of sin and death' so evident in gun violence," says Curtis Book, MCC East Coast peace and justice coordinator, citing Romans 8:2.

More than 1,700 people at 32 events heard local storytellers share personal experiences of loss and trauma because of illegal handguns. Along with other tour participants, they talked of ways faith communities and families can respond in order to cope with these losses and prevent further violence.

On the East Coast tour, which visited Philadelphia, Harrisburg (Pa.) and Harrisonburg (Va.), Book and J. Fred Kauffman, MCC Philadelphia program coordinator, spoke about illegally trafficked handguns, which they said are flooding urban neighborhoods already struggling with many other problems.

"Legally owned guns are used in very few crimes," says Kauffman, "so our concern is not law-abiding gun owners; it is precisely about illegally trafficked handguns."

**Typically a gun trafficker** gives money to friends who can pass background checks and asks them to buy multiple handguns at a legal gun shop. The straw purchasers then give the guns to the trafficker for a commission, and the trafficker sells the guns on the street to people who cannot buy a gun legally—youth or people with a criminal record.

If a gun used in crime is traced back to straw purchasers, they claim it was "lost" or "stolen" and face no liability.

In Great Lakes, after presentations in the Chicago area, Kauffman also led an Indiana workshop for Goshen and Elkhart pastors that culminated in visits to three local gun shops. Most of the pastors had never been in a gun shop. The goal was to learn how gun shops operate and engage in discussions about how the owners can be allies in the fight to keep illegal guns off the streets.—*Mimi Copp Johnson and Jennifer Steiner of Mennonite Central Committee*

Jennifer Steiner

**Talking illegal guns with the sheriff**: J. Fred Kauffman (left), Mennonite Central Committee Philadelphia program coordinator, leads an Indiana workshop for Goshen and Elkhart pastors that included a discussion with Elkhart County Sheriff Brad Rogers. The workshop culminated in visits to three local gun shops.

### What can I do?

1. Connect with a church that has been affected by gun violence. Listen to their members' stories of how this violence has touched their lives.

2. Pray for victims and offenders of gun violence, for churches and communities that walk alongside them.

3. Sign MCC Gospel of Jesus & Gun Violence postcard on gun violence prevention to send to elected officials.

4. Make use of the MCC Preventing Gun Violence packet with your church or group for study, discussion and prayer.

5. Do research on illegal gun markets. Learn about the flow of illegally trafficked handguns from legal gun shops to criminal markets through straw purchasers.—*Mimi Copp Johnson and Jennifer Steiner*

# Good News Seminary turns nightmares into dreams

## On his way to commit suicide, Ofosu met man who introduced him to Christ.

In the past, Philip Ofosu attempted to take his own life. Now he is leading a congregation in Ghana.

Philip Yaw Ofosu's life has been shaped by dreams, adversity and miracles. Good News Theological College and Seminary has helped him make sense of it all.

Ofosu was born on the day some soldiers of the Ghanaian army overthrew the government of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, Feb. 24, 1966. His parents sacrificed much to permit their son to attend primary school. However, his father's death forced Ofosu to drop out to help his mother on the family farm.

**Sometimes, Ofosu wept** over the misfortune that prevented him from continuing his studies. One day, a policeman saw Ofosu's tears as he went to work in the fields. When the policeman learned Ofosu was crying because he longed to go to school, the policeman provided a large portion of the required fees. Ofosu sold firewood to pay for the remainder.

Making good use of the policeman's seed money, Ofosu furthered his education at Tamale Polytechnic, where he majored in construction, and at University College of Education in Kumasi. Ofosu worked as a technical instructor in secondary schools to help pay for his studies.

Although a student and a teacher following his dreams by day, Ofosu was a victim of nightmares when he tried to sleep. In 1989, he said he began to feel trapped and had no one to help him with these spiritual attacks.

Philip Ofosu

"A snake bit me in a dream. When I woke up, I sensed burning at the place the snake bit. In another dream someone shot me. On waking up from the sleep, I felt a sharp pain at the place in my leg where the bullet hit," Ofosu says.

**To counteract this increasingly** unbearable oppression, Ofosu spent all his salary and borrowed large sums to consult occult specialists. He visited 12 fetish shrines in all.

"But the experiences became worse," Ofosu says. In 1996, Ofosu fell so deeply into debt trying to buy freedom from fearsome night terrors that he decided to take his own life. His first attempt was with a knife. When that failed, he put some poison in his pocket and armed himself with a rope. He took public transportation to a deserted place.

"On my way to the spot where I intended to commit suicide, I met a man who introduced me to Christ," Ofosu says.

A physical person or an angel? It is not clear. When Ofosu returned home, he and Margaret, his wife of seven years, held hands and prayed. Margaret had also been having premonitions of her husband's death. In dreams, she saw Ofosu with bound hands surrounded by people threatening him with a spear. But then heavenly light broke into this scene of torture, and she witnessed her husband being saved by angels.

James Krabill

Mary Mensah, a prophetess in The Living Church of God, reads aloud from the Bible in a Good News Theological College and Seminary course in Ghana. To her left, Harriet Addo from Divine Redeemer's Ministry follows the text. Good News trains leaders of African-Initiated Churches.

"That night the chains fell away, and now I am free," Ofosu says, describing what happened as he and Margaret prayed.

Ofosu and his wife both became Christians. In 2000, Ofosu resigned from his teaching positions and plunged into serious Bible studies. With the help of his wife and a friend, Ofosu began a prayer ministry with five people under a big cashew tree. Today, this has grown into a 70-member congregation, Christ Celebration Church.

**In 2005, Ofosu enrolled** at Good News Theological College and Seminary and graduated three years later with a bachelor of theology degree.

Good News Theological College and Seminary grew out of a collaborative ministry that began in 1969, when Mennonite Board of Missions, a Mennonite Mission Network predecessor agency, was invited by Church of the Lord (Aladura), an African-Initiated Church, to begin a biblical seminary in a suburb of Accra.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Is the church afraid to talk about sex?

## Loewen: Mennonite youth may think homosexual sex is the only kind there is.

Youth growing up in many Mennonite churches could be forgiven for thinking that homosexual sex is the only kind of intercourse people have, because that's the only kind many congregations discuss.

Keith Graber Miller, professor of Bible, religion and philosophy at Goshen (Ind.) College, says that congregations have been so focused on gay and lesbian relationships that they have missed an opportunity to discuss intimacy with heterosexual youth and young adults.

"If I'm heterosexual, I get no guidelines for how to think about my body, sex, sexuality and relating to the other sex," he says. "That's a really bizarre thing."

While some churches, families or youth groups do a good job, many ignore the uncomfortable subject to the possible detriment of future relationships.

"I don't know how we can imagine, as a church, that our people are going to grow up to be healthy sexual beings in congregations if the church does not talk about sexuality at all during their adolescent years," he says.

While the topic may make some parents or pastors squirm, many youth have questions the church won't answer.

Emily Loewen

Keith Graber Miller

**What to talk about?**

The conversation in many churches may focus on homosexual relationships, but youth and young adults often have different priorities.

Twenty years ago, Graber Miller promised himself he wouldn't give presentations on sexuality if he could not speak about masturbation. While he says that the majority of men and women self-pleasure, including those in relationships, many wonder if it's OK or feel tremendous guilt about it—something he aims to alleviate.

He usually links that discussion to one about pornography because for many people the two are closely linked. While Graber Miller affirms masturbation, he is against pornography, arguing that it exploits women and can create unrealistic expectations for relationships. He advocates separating masturbation from pornography in order to foster healthier relationships.

In the past, students have come to him, saying, "I'm in a relationship now really for the first time with somebody I really care about, and I'm finding that my past addictions to pornography are affecting the way I'm relating to the person I'm dating, and I don't want to be that kind of person," Graber Miller says.

When serving as youth minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, Anna Rehan also gained an understanding of what youth and young adults want to know, and masturbation is one of many items on the list. She says that many questions are practical in nature, such as:

- At what point in a relationship should you or shouldn't you have sex?
- Is it OK to live with a partner before marriage?

"Those are realities they're asking [about] because that's what's out there," says Rehan, who is now retired but serving on an interim basis until July.

Wendy (Harder) Eisler

Wendy (Harder) Eisler also encountered youth with a lot of practical questions throughout her 17 years in youth ministry.

"When they start dating, that becomes their world, and so they have tons of questions," she says. "I guess to me there wasn't ever a topic that was taboo."

Eisler says that sometimes kids just need a safe space to raise questions they are embarrassed to ask their friends or parents. Having open communication allows teens to understand what their friends are talking about, and then form their own opinions.

Both Eisler and Graber Miller stress to youth that there are stages of intimacy in relationships and encourage them to consider the significance of each one. Eisler provided youth with a pamphlet that described different stages of intimacy and placed the talk in a series of Bible studies on relationships.

**Graber Miller often distributes** a list of approximately 40 intimate behaviors, from simple things like holding hands all the way to intercourse. He wants to remind youth that there are many acts of intimacy before sex that can have a significant impact on their lives and relationships.

"What I want us to get away from is, to think that sex, having sex, is genital-genital sexual intercourse only. To me, there are broader forms of sexual behaviors that involve genitalia that are morally significant and that should not be entered into lightly," he says.

When it comes to guidelines about sex, there are variations in what leaders will suggest. While Graber Miller says he is realistic that not all young people will save sex for committed, publicly affirmed relationships, he still presents that as the ideal.

Rehan says that she wants to affirm sex in a committed relationship, warning youth against recreational sex, which she says is harmful over time.

"I think that would be our concern," she says, "to let kids know that you've got these impulses, and it feels good for the moment. But what are some of the long-term effects that that can have and how healthy is it in the long run?"

Eisler always made clear to the youth where she stood but remained open to talking with those who didn't do the same.

"What I learned early on in dealing with teenagers," she says, "is if you do draw the lines in the sand and you create things really black and white, they stop talking to you."

Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba and a longtime youth pastor, takes a similar approach to encouraging a dialogue with youth. When teaching Sunday school, she tries to give them some guidelines but doesn't set out strict rules, even though that's what some parents may prefer.

"We want to help our kids think and understand," she says, "and so giving them guidelines for a variety of scenarios isn't probably our most helpful strategy."

**How to have the conversation**: Once a congregation decides to talk with youth about sex, it faces another significant hurdle: how to bring it up.

Both Eisler and Graber Miller suggest bringing in a facilitator from the congregation or community who is familiar with the topic, such as counselors, social workers or doctors.

Graber Miller has also asked youth to write down questions on the topic ahead of time to diffuse some of the tension. Youth groups can also watch popular movies, then discuss "what kind of messages are being communicated and how is that similar to or different from what you hear from the church and from your school and from your peers," he says.

Giesbrecht suggests bringing in couples or individuals in different stages of life to share about their experiences in adolescence and adulthood, and the stages of their relationships.

"That has been helpful because it often will normalize experience, and kids will just see people in the congregation differently," she says. She has also found that holding both co-ed sessions and separate ones for women and men helps some youth feel safer to voice their questions or concerns.

Youth assemblies or provincial retreats are also good opportunities to have a guest speaker start the conversation. Then youth leaders can pick up the discussion in smaller groups.

Janna Wiebe, youth pastor at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and a session planner for this year's Mennonite Church Canada youth assembly, says there will be talks with youth about sexuality, although the details aren't confirmed at this time.

"At the 2007 assembly, the seminar on sexuality was the most popular and well-attended seminar of the entire week, which just goes to show that youth crave a safe outlet to talk about and learn more about sexuality," she says.

While talking with youth is important, both Giesbrecht and Graber Miller suggest that sexuality should also be part of congregational discussions. Hearing about sex, or even relationships, pregnancy, adoption and infertility, would foster healthier congregations and help youth feel more comfortable asking questions. Observing honest discussion from the pulpit "would help youth in the church say, 'Oh look, the church does talk about sexuality and bodies, and maybe it's OK for me to talk to people here about them, too,'" Graber Miller says.

If congregations choose not to talk about sexuality from a faith perspective, it's as good as telling youth that anything they hear from friends or the media is good enough.—Anna Rehan

**Why it's important**: If congregations choose not to talk about sexuality from a faith perspective, it's as good as telling youth that anything they hear from friends or the media is good enough, Rehan says. Instead, she says, congregations could say, Here's another way of thinking about it as Christians. As a child of God, how do we look at this whole picture?

Some parents, teachers or youth leaders may fear they will encourage more sexual behavior by talking about it, but Graber Miller says that is unlikely. "We're not going to make them want to rush out and engage in something," he says. "They are exposed to this all the time in other kinds of ways. They just haven't had a chance to think about them from a faith perspective or from an ethical perspective."

Furthermore, he says, if the church wants to remain relevant, it cannot ignore the issue.

"The church will become increasingly irrelevant to youth if they're not talking about sex and sexuality," he says.

While Giesbrecht agrees that discussions with youth are important, she firmly believes congregations need to foster conversations about relationships in all age groups.

"It's actually about us as adults, as a whole community, being healthier, and then our children will feel our health," Giesbrecht says. "They will experience it. That's the greater gift."—*Emily Loewen, a co-editor of the Young Voices column in* Canadian Mennonite. *This article first appeared in the Feb. 4 issue and is used with permission.*

# Grandpals program connects generations

## Landis Homes residents and fourth and fifth grade students bond.

When Kylah Morales, a sixth grader at Hinkletown Mennonite School (HMS) in Ephrata, Pa., was asked to select a mentor during her baptism preparation class at New Holland (Pa.) Mennonite Church, she immediately knew whom she wanted to ask: her "GrandPal" from the past two years, Marian Jane Stoltzfus.

Marian Jane Stoltzfus and Morales had connected through GrandPals, a cooperative program between HMS and Landis Homes Retirement Community, Lititz, Pa., while Kylah was in fourth and fifth grade at HMS. Morales and Stoltzfus have built a relationship that has enriched their lives, their communities, their church and their faith. Morales knew Stoltzfus was the person she could rely on as they worked through a list of discussion questions leading up to Kylah's baptism and talk with about her thoughts and problems.

The GrandPals program connects fourth and fifth grade HMS students with Landis Homes residential residents for seven activities during the school year.

The award-winning GrandPals program began in 1999 with HMS teacher Harriet Douple's vision for an intergenerational relationship for her students that would benefit all participants. Initially the relationship was to be through email and letter correspondence but has adapted to regular visits for joint activities. These activities include a GrandPal interview in September that students then use to write a report shared with GrandPals in May.

Other activities include a Bible Bee, Christmas program, sharing day, and a GrandPal visit to HMS to view the middle school theater production with the students. Students become acquainted with their GrandPal in fourth grade, and the relationship extends into fifth grade when possible. By the end of fifth grade, many have formed valuable friendships that benefit both generations.—*Joint release of Hinkletown Mennonite School and Landis Homes*

Photo provided

Landis Homes resident Barbara Longenecker sits with Dominic Answer, a fifth grade student at Hinkletown Mennonite School in Ephrata, Pa.

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# Goshen will leave a 'green carbon footprint'

## No coal, gas or oil is now used to provide electricity for the campus.

Jodi H. Beyeler

**Green footprint:** Goshen (Ind.) College president Jim Brenneman (left), Northern Indiana Public Service Company's manager of public affairs Angela Nelson and Goshen College sustainability coordinator and utilities manager Glenn Gilbert hold up a representational "green carbon footprint" on May 13.

Goshen (Ind.) College president Jim Brenneman announced May 13 that the college has taken a major step by voluntarily purchasing all its electricity from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power. This single action will reduce the college's carbon footprint by about 45 percent.

The college is the first major customer of Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO), the regional electricity provider, to take the action and participate in its new Green Power Program.

"What this means for Goshen College is that going forward from today, no more coal, gas or oil will be burned, no more carbon dioxide will be introduced into the atmosphere to provide electricity for our campus," Brenneman said during an all-campus convocation. Before this step, the equivalent of 24 train car loads of coal were needed (or about 12 tons per student) to provide electricity to the campus each year. Coal is Indiana's primary energy source.

**In 2007, Brenneman became** a charter signatory to the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment. In doing so, he joined with leaders of 175 other higher education institutions in agreement to neutralize greenhouse gas emissions. Goshen College was one of two higher education institutions in Indiana and the first Mennonite college or university to sign the landmark climate commitment. There now are 664 signatories.

"We did that because we are very concerned about life on this planet, it was one more way we can care for the world, and it was part of our broader ecological stewardship commitment," Brenneman said. "Goshen College, like the Mennonite church we are a part of, has always been committed to being global citizens."

By signing up for this program—which recently became available to all customers—NIPSCO buys renewable energy certificates on the college's behalf. RECs are the environmental attributes associated with electricity that is generated from renewable sources. NIPSCO Green Power Program RECs are certified through Green-e® Energy, the nation's leading renewable energy certification and verification program. Green-e® Energy provides independent, third-party certification to ensure that certified renewable energy meets strict environmental and consumer-protection standards.

**Participants in the program pay** a monthly premium in addition to the standard electric rate, which goes entirely to pay for the RECs.

In response to the college's energy efficiency efforts and commitment to sustainability, NIPSCO's manager of public affairs Angela Nelson presented a $5,000 check to the college's Ecological Stewardship Committee to help with further initiatives on campus in the future.

Since 2007, the college has been very successful at energy conservation.

"In that time, both natural gas and electrical consumption have been reduced by over 25 percent," said Glenn Gilbert, the campus' sustainability coordinator and utilities manager. "Conservation will continue to be a major component of our strategy."

> Going forward from today, no more coal, gas or oil will be burned, no more carbon dioxide will be introduced into the atmosphere to provide electricity for our campus.—Jim Brenneman

The college is using about the same amount of electricity on campus today as it did in 1992, despite adding 290,000 more square feet of building space.

Gilbert added: "We seek to be leaders in environmental sustainability and model a safe and effective way for our society to move away from dependency on fossil fuel-based energy sources that have proven to be so destructive to our environment."—*Jodi H. Beyeler for Goshen College*

## CALENDAR

"Moral Dilemmas in Healthcare" is the theme for the second **Annual Gathering of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship** (MHF), June 21-23, on the campus of Goshen College, Goshen, Ind. Among the plenary session speakers will be Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, a national expert on health-care law and health-care reform, and Ervin R. Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA. The annual gathering also continues the tradition of MMA and MNA to make the weekend enjoyable and inspiring for the whole family. Worship times at the beginning of each plenary session will be led by Goshen folk singers Gwen and Les Gustafson-Zook. The couple will also present a late-evening concert on Saturday. Throughout the weekend, child-care and children and youth programs are offered for all families who register by May 31. Highlighting the activities planned for school-age children will be a visit to the Merry Lea Environmental Center, operated by Goshen College. More information and registration instructions are available online at www.mennohealth.org, by email at info@mennohealth.org or by calling the MHF Office at 888-406-3643.

## WORKERS

**Angustia, Moises**, was ordained as pastor at Iglesia Unida de Avivamiento, Brooklyn, N.Y., on March 17.

**Garcia, Ivania**, was licensed as associate pastor at Iglesia Manantial de Vida, Camden, N.J., on March 24.

**Gunderson, April Dawn**, was ordained as associate pastor of care and counsel at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on April 7.

**Kabamba, Louis**, was ordained as an evangelist at French Church for Revival, Mount Joy, Pa., on March 24.

**Nzey, Jean Bruno**, was ordained as pastor at French Church for Revival, Mount Joy, Pa., on March 24.

**Yoder, Don A.**, was ordained at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., on April 14, while serving as interim pastor there.

## OBITUARIES

**Albrecht, Carolyn Augusta Bontrager**, 84, Goshen, Ind., died April 12. Spouse: Nevin Albrecht. Parents: Orvan and Grace Mishler Bontrager. Children: Jerry, Lynn, Lola Gingerich, Sharlene Patterson; 12 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**Beber, Aarron Shawn**, 39, Fort Wayne, Ind., died March 10. Spouse: April Dollier Beber. Parents: David Fisher and Ellen Jayne Beber. Children: Madelynn Ellen Jayne Beber, Alexis Marie Ayers, Bruce Demmeree Von Beber. Funeral: March 14 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

**Bowman, Vera Diefenbacher**, 79, Floradale, Ontario, died April 14. Spouse: Abner Bowman (deceased). Parents: Aaron and Irene Diefenbacher. Children: Karen Gaul, Gloria Martin; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 17 at Floradale Mennonite Church.

**Gerber, Emery L.**, 83, Hesston, Kan., died April 5. Spouse: Joan Ely Gerber. Parents: Joe and Ida Yoder Gerber. Children: Jerry, Lyn, Jana Heger, Lucy Gerber Bontrager; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Horst, Mary Ellen Stutzman**, 86, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 4. Spouse: Samuel L. Horst. Parents: James and Edith Stutzman. Children: Kenneth, Hannah Schertz, Sylvia Bender, Barbara Horst, Mary Horst, David Buchanan, Carol Shafer, Ellarica Moatz Horst; eight grandchildren. Funeral: April 15 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

**King, Grace Luceal Schmucker**, 97, Wauseon, Ohio, died Jan. 1, of cerebral vascular disease. Spouse: Willard Wyse King (deceased). Parents: Charles L. and Hannah Freyenberger Schmucker. Children: Charlene VanPelt, Judy Selzer, Dan, Robert, Ruth Ann King, David; seven grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 6 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Pettisville, Ohio.

**Kinsinger, Nora Dalene Doolin**, 92, Wellman, Iowa, died March 22. Spouse: Maynard Kinsinger (deceased). Parents: John and Ester Yoder Doolin. Children: Eddie, Linda Anders; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 27 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

**Mullet, Bessie Evelyn Johnson**, 89, Hesston, Kan., died April 17. Spouse: David "Roy" LeRoy Mullet (deceased). Parents: Ernest and Edith Cole Johnson. Children: David, Bob, Paul, Steve, Mick; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 26 at Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston.

**Musser, Josephine Lydia Maust**, 76, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 24. Parents: Richard and Elizabeth Gunden Maust. Child: Jane Musser Blackburn; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 28 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Nafziger, Blanche Marie Wyse**, 95, Pettisville, Ohio, died April 21. Spouse: Earl Nafziger (deceased). Parents: Clarence and Ella Roth Wyse. Children: Janice Nafziger, Rachel Lindsay, Rhoda Schrag, Charles, Ralph, Ellis, Emerson, Verlin, Robert, Roger, John, Joseph; 18 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 26 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

**Nice, Frank E.**, 80, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 23, of Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia. Spouse: Evelyn Godshall Nice. Parents: Byron and Blanche Nice. Children: Karen Nice-Webb, Eddie, Janet King, Grace Graber; nine grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville , Va.

**Nice, Howard Fred**, 90, McMinnville, Ore., died April 19, of a stroke. Spouse: Irene Loretta Nice. Spouse: Luella Wolfer Nice (deceased). Parents: Reno Ray and Edna Rose Wadleigh Nice. Children: Marlene Kropf, Judi Jones, Gary, Dennis, Douglas, Loren Howard; 14 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 23 at Church on the Hill, McMinnville.

**Oswald, Pauline M. Stutzman**, 91, Streetsboro, Ohio, died March 2. Spouse: Oren Oswald (deceased). Parents: Lloyd and Erma Miller Stutzman. Children: Elizabeth Oswald, Margaret Ruth Jackson, Stanley, Vern. Funeral: March 6 at Aurora Mennonite Church, Aurora, Ohio.

**Oyer, Margaret "Margie" Yoder**, 85, Goshen, Ind., died April 6. Spouse: Richard "Dick" Oyer. Parents: A.D. and Elnora Horst Yoder. Funeral: April 13 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Pankratz, Linda Gering**, 96, Freeman, S.D., died April 24. Spouse: Curt Pankratz (deceased). Parents: Joe D. and Caroline Preheim Gering. Children: Deanna Kehn, Duane; six grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 28 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

**Payne, Donald William**, 83, Pulaski, Iowa, died April 27, of complications from diabetes and bronchial distress. Spouse: Lydia Jean Banwart Payne. Parents: Willie Cleo and Lela Mary Cowles Payne. Children: Debra Knapp, Donnita Payne Hostetler, Dan, Dwayne David; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at Pulaski Mennonite Church.

**Regier, Gladys Irene Dester**, 86, North Newton, Kan., died Jan. 8, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Raymond Richard Regier. Parents: Emil Albert and Edna Christine Wicke Dester. Children: Patrice Regier Krause, Bruce, Christine Regier Toews; three grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 21 at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton.

**Roggie, Verna R. Lehman**, 81, Lowville, N.Y., died April 27. Spouse: Howard Roggie (deceased). Parents: Erwin Z. and Lena H. Zehr Lehman. Children: Wayne, Benjamin, Glenn, Bradley, Joan Lehman, Judy Wood; 17 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 30 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

**Shank, Joseph Geil**, 95, Harrisonburg, Va., died Feb. 13, of a stroke. Spouse: Sybil Marion Koger Shank (deceased). Parents: Samuel Aaron and Mary Katherine "Kitty" Geil Shank. Children: Arneda Faye Steiner, Joseph Geil "J.G." Shank II, Fern Shank Miller, Evelyn Yvonne Mast, Nelson Lionel, Charles Samuel; 14 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren; 10 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 15 at Trissles Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.

**Shetler, Alice Crecraft**, 91, Scottdale, Pa., died March 16. Spouse: Maynard Shetler (deceased). Parents: Clyde and Jenny Lunn Crecraft. Child: Larry; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Scottdale Mennonite Church.

**Stoltzfus, Floyd L.**, 84, Loveland, Colo., died April 30. Spouse: Lynette Harris Stoltzfus. Parents: William and Mabel Stoltzfus. Children: Galen, Jim; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 4 at First Mennonite Church of Denver, Denver, Colo.

**Stoltzfus, Marian B. Smoker**, 87, New Holland, Pa., died March 19, of cerebrovascular disease. Spouse: Omar S. Stoltzfus. Parents: Samuel Z. and Barbara Beiler Smoker. Children: Barbara A. Riehl, Janet L. Metzler; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Garden Spot Village Chapel, New Holland.

**Teagie, Rev. Norman H.**, 88, Hickory, Va. and Aroda, Va., died April 3. Spouse: Fannie Troyer Teague. Parents: Harry and Maude Reeves Teague. Children: Sharon Vincent, Carole Schumacher, Wanda Alger, David, Samuel; 11 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Memorial services: April 20 at Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church, Chesapeake, Va., and April 21 at Cornerstone Church of Broadway, Broadway, Va.

**White, Paul R.**, 82, Lititz, Pa., died April 6. Spouse: Ruth Ebersole White. Parents: Ira M., Sr., and Mary Martin White. Funeral: April 11 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

**Widrick, Betty R. Roggie**, 76, Lowville, N.Y., died April 8, of complication following open heart surgery. Spouse: Gerald Widrick (deceased). Parents: Benjamin and Madeline Yousey Roggie. Children: Lynn, Neil, Gail Kogut, Kari Taylor; 11 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 12 at First Mennonite Church of New Bremen, New Bremen, N.Y.

**Wyse, Donald Gene**, 81, Columbus, Ohio, died April 4. Spouse: Joyce M. Miller Wyse. Parents: Vernon and Ivah Rupp Wyse. Children: Tim, Doug, Jill; five grandchildren. Funeral: April 8 at Columbus Mennonite Church.

## RESOURCES

**Fifty Shades of Grace: Stories of Inspiration and Promise** (Herald Press, 2013, $12.99) is a collection of stories about experiencing God's grace in the midst of everyday life. The book explores what grace looks like in action—even in a world jaded by violence and unforgiveness—and how it can triumph over great tragedy with mercy and hope.

**Mennonite Girls Can Cook Celebrations** by Lovella Schellenberg, Anneliese Friesen, Betty Reimer, Bev Klassen, Charlotte Penner, Ellen Bayles, Judy Wiebe, Julie Klassen, Kathy McLellan and Marg Bartel (Herald Press, 2013, $29.99) shares recipes to honor all of life, including birth, childhood, marriage, family, outdoors, community, hospitality, milestones, holidays and life.

**John (Believers Church Bible Commentary)** by Willard Swartley (Herald Press, 2013, $34.99) studies how the Gospel of John draws us into union with God and into unity with one another. It communicates who Jesus is, in both intimate and profound dimensions. The commentary provides sections on the text in biblical context and the text in the life of the church.

**For a Church to Come: Experiments in Postmodern Theory and Anabaptist Thought** by Peter Blum (Herald Press, 2013, $21.99) explores some of our commonly held ways of talking about knowledge, meaning, commitment and action. Blum suggests that some postmodern theoretical work, often dismissed or assumed to be anti-Christian, is well worth bringing into contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite conversations about discipleship and corporate life.

**Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance** by Valerie Weaver-Zercher (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $24.95) analyzes the growing trend of Amish romance fiction and places it in the context of contemporary literature, religion and popular culture.

**Making Peace: The Role Played by the Community of Sant'Egidio in the International Arena**, edited by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, translated by John Milfsud (New City Press, 2013, $17.95), describes how this movement of lay people founded within the Catholic Church has worked to help resolve civil wars and international conflicts.

**The Story of Original Sin** by John E. Toews (Pickwick Publications, 2013, $18) traces the history of the interpretation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and explains the emergence of the doctrine of original sin on the basis of a mistranslation of the Greek text of Romans 5:12.

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***Jubilee Celebration*: First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana**, Ill., is planning a 50th anniversary reunion weekend on July 26-28, 2013. All former attendees are warmly invited to return for a weekend of fellowship, worship, service and music. Check out information on www.fmc-cu.org or call the church at 217-367-5353.

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**Pittsburgh (Pa.) Mennonite Church**, a vibrant and talented urban congregation, seeks ***full-time pastor*** starting as early as July 2013. Predominantly young adults and young families, PMC is actively involved in local, denominational, and global missions. Send inquiries to pmcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

Wanted: **Brethren Press and MennoMedia** are seeking a ***project editor***, up to full-time, for a new Sunday school curriculum, *Shine: Living in God's Light*. The editor works closely with free-lance writers and editors and various committees and reports to the project director. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. Find the job description and contact information at www.shinecurriculum.com.

**North Danvers Mennonite Church** of rural Danvers, Ill., is seeking a ***full-time pastor***. A member of the Central District Conference, we have a Sunday morning all-ages attendance of about 80 and value discipleship, worship, service and fellowship. Would prefer a candidate with experience, seminary training, Anabaptist values, and strong preaching and communication skills but will consider all applicants. Church website: Northdanverschurch.com. Search committee contact: marvelcraig@yahoo.com.

**Mennonite Church USA** seeks a ***denominational minister of youth and young adults***. Visit www.mennoniteusa.org/about/jobs/ for more information.

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- AMAZON RAINFOREST & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (Jan 16-26/2014)
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- JAPAN & KOREA (Sept 15-25/2014)
- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA (Oct 10-21/2014)
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- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in KENYA & TANZANIA (Feb 6-18/2015)

**CUSTOM TOURS**
- HAITI CUSTOM TOUR (Feb 27-March 9/2014)
- HESSTON COLLEGE STUDENT CHOIR TOUR to EUROPE (May 13-June 3/2014)

**HOLY LAND TOURS**
- HOLY LAND: HARVEST the OLIVES & EXPERIENCE the BIBLE (Oct 12-21/2013)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR RICH BUCHER (Nov 5-14/2013)
- HOLY LAND TOUR with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (Feb 12-20/2014)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DAVID BOSHART (April 24-May 3/2014)
- HOLY LAND TOUR with PASTOR DARREL TOEWS (Feb 19-28/2014)
- FROM NAZARETH to ROME with PASTOR JIM BROWN (Nov 3-15/2014)

**HERITAGE TOURS**
- RUSSIA & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY **SOLD OUT!** (Sept 4-16/2013)
- INDIA: HISTORY, CHANGE and the CHURCH with BERT & MARTHA LOBE (Oct 6-21/2013)
- EXPERIENCE SOUTH AMERICA (Oct. 18-31/2013)
- EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 16-28/2014)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 24-July 7/2014)
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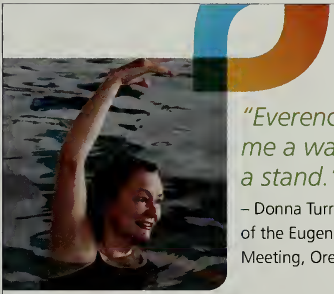

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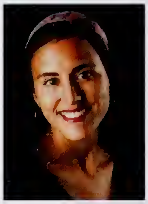
# A call for stories from those on the margins



**Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz** lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

When we pick up a Mennonite publication or see a Mennonite in print, the voices we often hear from are among the following: Mennonite pastors, seminarians, service project workers, Mennonite parachurch employees, denominational leaders and Mennonite church members. These voices are strong and prominent and the ones relied upon to direct the denomination as it finds its way in our society.

I can no longer find myself among this list, and as I continue to share my experiences with the Mennonite community, I've wondered to what extent my role will continue among you. With much introspection, I believe my story even until now has a purpose greater than just a life lesson for me. I knew I was called to serve you all, and I didn't know how. Since leaving the Mennonite church, I've experienced a depth of love and understanding from a handful of people within the church as well as sustained invitations to continue to serve. This alone has surprised and humbled me. Yet I continue finding myself retreating into a default position of margins and shadows. The grief would not leave my side, and as I prepared to write to you all, God opened my heart to the realization that I may not be the only one.

> These voices found in the margins may have a profound gift of greater Mennonite awareness and precise vision for the future.

I'm confident some of you reading this right now may find yourselves in the margins with me. Maybe you've left the Mennonite world years or decades ago but still receive this magazine because somehow its focus, its work, its stories are still relevant to you, even if this is the only way you engage Mennonites.

**Maybe you call yourself** an Anabaptist but for some reason can no longer sit in the pews of a Mennonite church. Maybe a scholarship gave you a Mennonite education, but your last encounter with Mennonites was graduation day. Maybe the short-term warm embrace and sturdy hands of Mennonite service built your life, but you no longer share their "compañerismo." Maybe you live and work arm in arm with Mennonites in cities like North Newton, Goshen and Harrisonburg, believing in the work you're all doing, but outside the 40-hour work week you're estranged from the community. Maybe you grew up within a Mennonite family but with age have slowly slipped away from the label. And finally, maybe you've embodied the love of the Anabaptist story and/or theological focus but cannot relate to the social, cultural and/or political interpretation expressed within the church.

I'm a firm believer that these voices found in the margins may have a profound gift of greater Mennonite awareness and precise vision for the future. Is this the time that they be heard? Would Mennonites of privilege and power as a group make a concrete, unified effort to listen deeply to these voices? What if we all stopped to hear their stories? What would they say? Are we afraid as a collective group to hear them speak, afraid they may see clearly that we've chosen to hide away? Would they be as gracious to us as we'd need for them to be? Could they paint a picture that is similar to what we've tried painting for ourselves? Could they show us a new way of being church?

**My brothers and sisters** that lie in the margins, you matter, and your journey is of value to me and many others. There are many of us that hold a deep sorrow and/or longing. I invite you to step out of the shadows and join the hundreds like you. It's time for our voices to be heard and be present to what we share. Into what form our voices will shape, I do not know yet, but I'm calling you to reach out.

Unified, we can breathe renewed life within ourselves, among our local communities that see within us the Mennonite fingerprint and upon the church and beyond as the waves of our sharing impact all. It is time, time to bring these stories to the light and for your words to be known. I look forward to receiving email messages from you and seeing where God, our Unifying Source, takes us. Thank you. TM

## FILM REVIEWS

**Mud** (PG-13) is a coming-of-age film about two Arkansas teenagers who become friends with Mud, a fugitive trying to reunite with the woman he loves. The film takes us into the lives of people who make their living off the river and shows the lessons of learning about love. This poignant film avoids clichés about Southern culture and shows a tender but realistic portrait of a father and a son.—*Gordon Houser*

**No** (R) recounts a true story from 1988, when Chilean military dictator Augusto Pinochet called for a referendum to decide whether or not he would stay in power for the next eight years. The leaders of the opposition persuade a young advertising executive, René Saavedra, to head their "no" campaign. The film makes excellent use of irony, depicting the toppling of an oppressive regime through the use of advertising principles and catchy jingles about happiness. It also shows the courage required to stand up to power. *No* was nominated in 2012 for best foreign language film.—*gh*

**42** (PG-13) tells the story of Jackie Robinson, a Negro League baseball player who in 1946 receives a call from Branch Rickey, an executive with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Both men are Methodists, and their faith helps them work together to break the unspoken color line, as Robinson becomes the first African American Major League player. He faces unrelenting racist hostility but endures with a Christlike forbearance. The film is straightforward and well-acted. While it presents Robinson as heroic, it also shows his struggles.—*gh*

## BOOK REVIEW

**Fifty Shades of Grace: Stories of Inspiration and Promise** (Herald Press, 2013, $12.99) is a collection of stories about experiencing God's grace in the midst of everyday life. (Full disclosure: I wrote one of the stories.) One positive aspect of the book is its specificity. It records actual experiences rather than belaboring generalities.—*gh*

# Books on emergence, saints, Yoder

Good books are being published every day. May you find time to read some of the following.

**Emergence:** Phyllis Tickle presents a fascinating account in *Emergence Christianity: What It Is, Where It Is Going and Why It Matters* (BakerBooks, 2012, $19.99). The entire book attempts to describe a movement that resists definition.

She delves into the history of emergent churches, focusing primarily on the United States while recognizing that Emergence Christianity "is international in scope."

She notes the change in emphasis from believe/behave/belong to belong/behave/believe. She writes that a central characteristic or principle is "its aggressive belief in inclusivity and the importance of diversity in worship and in community."

A photographic section of emergent churches and an annotated bibliography are bonuses to the book.

**Saints:** Two recent books provide vignettes about an array of saints through history. *Finding God: A Treasury of Conversion Stories*, edited by John M. Mulder (Eerdmans, 2012, $22), includes stories of 61 Christians, from Paul the Apostle to Bono the rock star. Many are well-known; many more are not. I'd never heard of Pat Day, for example (he's a jockey). The stories are interesting and inspiring.

Also inspiring are the stories in *Mothers, Sisters, Daughters: Standing on Their Shoulders* by Edwina Gateley and Sandra Mattucci (Orbis Books, 2012, $20), which introduces 22 women from different parts of the world, including politicians, mystics, religious women, poets, women from Scripture and environmentalists. Again, some are well-known; many are not. Each story is accompanied by a poem and a drawing from the authors.

**Yoder:** Although John Howard Yoder died in 1997, books by him and those reflecting on his work continue to be published. *Radical Christian Discipleship* (Herald Press, 2012, $15.99) is the first of three volumes of a series called John Howard Yoder's Challenge to the Church. While many of Yoder's works address scholars, this series collects pieces Yoder wrote that address ordinary Christians.

This volume focuses on how Christians are to follow Jesus in every aspect of our lives. It includes lectures, magazine articles and sermons he gave or wrote over a period from 1954 to 1978. He addresses various aspects of nonconformity, calling for conformity to Christ. While these essays are historically situated, they are remarkably relevant to Christians today.

*Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder's Trinitarian Theology of Culture* by Branson L. Parler (Herald Press, 2012, $24.99) is addressed to scholars but deals with important issues for the church.

Parler, who is a member of the Reformed Church, writes that "Yoder speaks not just to Mennonite questions or issues but to matters that all Christian traditions care about." Here he is addressing how Christians relate to culture. He notes that Yoder has been unfairly criticized and shows that Yoder advocates a trinitarian theology of culture that affirms God's work in creation and in redemption. He writes that "cultural practices and institutions that go against the way of Jesus also go against the grain of the universe."

Finally, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty and Early Christian Formation* by Helen Rhee (BakerAcademic, 2012, $29.99) shows how wealth and poverty, often ignored today, were central issues in the early church. There's much here for us to ponder.

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

*(Continued from page 5)*

Mennonites and didn't resort to caricature as much as he had expected.

It's interesting that Weaver-Zercher ends her article by saying that the next subgenre—to rival Amish romance tales—may be Mennonite fiction. Clearly, there has been long-standing fascination in North America with both the Amish and Mennonites (and not just on the romance front).

When my dad went to New York University to defend his dissertation, one of the three interviewers started out by saying, "So tell us, Rev. Shenk, about the Mennonites."

Slightly taken aback, my dad nonetheless held forth (with other questions interspersed) regarding Anabaptist history and the Mennonites. At the end of the two-hour session, with nary a question having been raised about his thesis, Dad's adviser stood, extended his hand and said, "Congratulations, Dr. Shenk." The bound dissertation can be found in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College.

As a copy editor and wordsmith, I love Weaver-Zercher's book title, *Thrill of the Chaste*. I might add that some of us in the Shenk family recently decided to publish (this year or next) Dad's two previously unpublished book manuscripts. Their titles are *The Book of Hezekiah* (what some people think is in the Bible but isn't) and *Common Sense on the Second Coming*, a review of end-times predictions, along with biblical analysis and interpretation. *—Dan Shenk, Goshen, Ind.*

## Jesus and gun violence

After reading the April issue, I wanted to share a few thoughts about the article, "Jesus and Gun Violence."

I have enjoyed having and shooting guns most of my life. I am 78 years old now. I do believe in nonviolence. I fulfilled my military obligation during the Korean War by testing milk from dairy cows in Michigan's upper peninsula for two years. As I read the article, I wondered: If spears, knives, ropes, hammers and nails were outlawed, would Jesus not have suffered death?

Also, in Genesis 4 there is a story about the murder of the second man on the earth—killed by his brother, the firstborn. I doubt if it was done with a gun. I believe murderers are people, not guns.*—Paul Gingerich, Pigeon, Mich.*

## God gave us oil and coal

Why did God put all this oil and coal on the earth if he doesn't want us to use it? God can pollute the earth more with one mountain blowing its top than we can do in years.*—Joseph Graber, White Pigeon, Mich.*

Attention pastors

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# God sightings at a graveside

*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.*
—1 Thessalonians 4:13 TNIV

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*—1 Peter 3:15b TNIV

I'd known Dennis Gillespie casually for several years. A retired Lutheran minister, he was intrigued by both Mennonites and Orthodox faith. In recent years, he attended our worship services at Park View Mennonite Church and occasionally participated in our Sunday school class. His recent death from cancer underscored his deep Christian faith in a most unusual way.

At the graveside service, pastor Phil Kniss commented that in all his years of conducting funerals, he had never met a man who was more prepared for death than Dennis Gillespie. Phil spoke on good evidence, which I shall explain partly as a God sighting, an evidence of God at work in Dennis' life.

Although I've known many people who purchased a casket in preparation for their burial, I've never met anyone else who kept the coffin in the living room for a couple of years prior to death. Lest you think of Dennis as morbid, let me explain.

Because of his appreciation for the Orthodox Christian tradition, Dennis purchased a wooden casket crafted by an Orthodox priest. The pine box doubled as an attractive cabinet, standing on end with several shelves that housed books and curios. Engraved on the side in artful eye-catching script were the words—Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. The lid (not used as furniture) was accented by an attractive Orthodox cross made of walnut wood, which contrasted nicely with the light-colored box. Dennis opted for a "green" burial, with no embalming or concrete burial crypt.

**At the grave site,** his three children and friends joined in a ritual infused with prayer, Scripture and careful theological reflection, all written by Dennis in anticipation of that moment. Halfway through the ritual of words, the casket was lowered into the ground, and participants were invited to throw dirt on top of the wooden box.

But another important part of Dennis' preparation for his death was evident in the way he faced his final weeks of life. It was only a few short weeks before his death that he first learned that he had terminal cancer. Although his final illness came as a surprise, he took the diagnosis in stride and made the final preparations for his homegoing.

**As I reflected on Dennis'** unusual preparation for death, I saw the work of God in his life in a new way. Now I am convinced it was God who gave Dennis the courage and grace to look death in the face without flinching.

In fact, I have observed a number of women and men who reflected an unusually calm demeanor as they faced their final days. In every case, their faith in God was a crucial part of their assurance. Within the last month, I have met two people who recently came to faith in Christ because they observed the peace and assurance with which particular people faced death.

I have observed a number of women and men who reflected an unusually calm demeanor as they faced their final days.

My interaction with Dennis Gillespie and others points me in a fresh way to look for the evidence of God's work in their lives. It prompts me to think that the close of one's life is perhaps one of the best times to look for the indications of God at work. It won't be possible, of course, to trace out all the ways that God's Spirit has been at work in an individual, but some clues are simply too obvious to miss.

May God help us all recognize at least those signs and give thanks to God. TM

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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# Should we censor history?

Everett J. Thomas

... *be sure your sins will find you out.*—Numbers 32:23b

Should we expunge from our website articles and names from articles we've published when someone requests we do this for them? That is a conundrum we face from time to time, and we usually turn to Colleen McFarland, director of archives and records management for Mennonite Church USA. Her response: "To request their removal from the Internet is, in effect, a request for censorship."

In the past year we've had several requests from people requesting we remove articles from our website that were either written by them or quoted them. They feared the articles would hurt their chances at employment should future employers do an Internet search with their names.

Even though the articles will remain in print in perpetuity (in our storage area if nowhere else), finding it in print is far more difficult than with a search engine on the Internet.

*New York Times* columnist Bill Keller published some stories about the problem in an April 28 column titled, "Erasing History."

When writing something that will be published —in print or on the Internet—calculate the risk.

"Editors tell me they are increasingly beset by readers who once cooperated with a reporter on a sensitive subject—nudism, anorexia, bullying—and years later find that old story a recurring source of distress. (It's called "source remorse."')," Keller writes.

More and more states are passing erasure laws that require some things to be removed from the record. But here's the dilemma: Can something that was true at one time become untrue? Keller describes the argument of lawyers in a class action lawsuit against some news outlets.

"They dispute whether something that was true when it happened can become not just private but actually untrue—so untrue you can swear an oath that it never happened and, in the eyes of the law, you'll be telling the truth," Keller writes.

In Christian terms, we describe this as forgiveness. We sing hymns about the blood of Jesus blotting out our sins. But when our sins are forgiven, is it as if they never happened? The blood of Christ washed them away?

Our work as reporters and editors results in a limited but permanent record of what some Mennonite Church USA members, congregations and organizations believe, say and do during this era. This record will be a resource to those who follow us—if for no other reason than so they don't make the same mistakes we do. But if we begin erasing history, where do we stop?

The Bible—especially the Old Testament—has some history in it that some may want to expunge. For example, if we erased God's promise to his chosen people about a promised land, would we have a Palestine-Israeli conflict that is so intractable? Or would we want to expunge the story about Jesus using whips in the temple to drive out the animals belonging to the money changers and upsetting their tables?

Because there is no resolution yet to the matter of erasing or censoring history, there is only one action to suggest: When writing something that will be published—in print or on the Internet—calculate the risk. Is this something that might one day be a problem where someone can quote you against yourself?

The Internet is indelible. Today's clever witticism may be tomorrow's embarrassment. To be sure, "Your sins will find you out."—*ejt*

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## A new journey

### for new moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

July 2013

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INSIDE:

- Worth getting your heart broken
- Entertaining angels
- Essentials for a good retirement
- Who needs reporters?
- Digital dieting

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TheMennonite July 2013 | Volume 16, Number 7

ON THE COVER: Photo by Emily Ralph

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*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

### Yost chicken house

Thank you, Susan Miller, for the tribute and recognition you gave to Lyle Yost (June). The article reminded me that I, too, am a beneficiary of his generosity. While my path seldom crossed Lyle's path, his gift to me has impacted my life for 50 years.

I moved to Hesston, Kan., in 1962 to enroll in the pastoral ministries program at Hesston College. I was married, and we had two small children. Finding suitable housing was a critical need. We were fortunate to have access to a modest two-bedroom house at 208 Academy St. The house was affectionately called "The Lyle Yost Chicken House." The building was moved from the farm and renovated for the purpose of housing pastoral ministry students. We lived in the house for two years and paid $10 per month rent for the privilege. I don't know how many people benefited from that gift. That journey through Hesston resulted in my giving over 40 years to pastoral ministries. —*John Otto, Newton, Kan.*

### Sickened by Yoder reference

Gordon Houser must not have retained much from the Colorado seminar he attended back in the early '90s on Men Working to Stop Violence Against Women. It's pretty sickening that he can encourage us to rush out and buy a "remarkably relevant" book about John Howard Yoder's admonishments to follow Jesus "in every aspect of our lives" (Mediaculture, June) and not even mention the irony of Yoder's chronic sexually abusive and violent behavior toward women all over the world for many years, while the church conducted its well-organized coverup.

Kind of ruins my day. Just more water in the face for those women who endured his assaults and have yet to receive any kind of official apology or recompense from the church. Just more accolades for their perpetrator. Just more "crying peace, peace when there is no peace." The pacifist theology of the Mennonite church is nothing but a sham until the men of the church become willing to apply an equal amount of passion for peace to their relationships with their sisters in Christ and work to stop violence against women and children in their own homes and congregations. They could start by including the ethical ironies of John Howard Yoder's life in their study of his work.—*Barbra Graber, Harrisonburg, Va.*

### Response to 'sickened'

I'm glad Barbra points out the ironies of Yoder's writings in view of his abusive behavior. Nevertheless, I believe we can learn from his insights as a scholar.—*Gordon Houser, associate editor*, The Mennonite

### Digital immigrants and natives

During Screen Free Week, I read Gordon Houser's "Digital Natives Keep Getting Younger" (Miscellany, May). I commend him for presenting the struggle we digital immigrants encounter when relating with digital natives.

Digital immigrants struggle to find evidence that screen time is beneficial for children under 2. We struggle with reports that excessive screen time is linked to childhood obesity, sleep disturbance, short attention spans and difficulty in completing tasks. In today's media-saturated, commercially-driven culture, we struggle to avoid violent, sexualized, stereotyped or commercial-

(*Continued on page 54*)

## Going to Phoenix convention? Why or why not? Facebook friends respond.

**Marta Castillo**: As an intercultural congregation (Caucasian, African, Caribbean, Asian, and Central and South American), we will not attend out of respect for our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters who can or will not attend due to the risk of being racially profiled and/or arrested.

**Andrea Zuercher**: I am going because I want to try to learn more about the challenges our Hispanic brothers and sisters face in Phoenix, to gain skills and understanding in helping address immigration issues in my own community and to join in solidarity with Mennonites in a border state whose lives are greatly affected by the immigration environment there.

**Janet Lynn Trevino Elizarraraz**: I'll be there to listen to what the Mennonites present have to say about the world around them. As a person of color and a Latina, I'm more curious than anything. I believe this denomination is at a crossroads, and I'm watching. Which way will it go? Will it make a difference? How will it handle the ever-increasing diversity of voices around it?

**Lori Klassen:** Not going—too far away, too much money and just not really all that interested anymore in what it has become.

**Beth Bontrager:** I have enjoyed conventions in the past as a teen and as an adult. But the price of convention and housing in hotels really irks me.

**Susan Greenwald:** Although I don't plan to go to the convention, I'm really puzzled as to the ongoing responses of why people choose not to come to Arizona. Injustice is everywhere all over the world, not just limited to Arizona. Arizona has a huge Hispanic and Native American population that appears to live and coexist with all the rest of us. We work, do business and live together. I personally enjoy the rich diverseness of my adopted state.

**Alberto Othuon Nyagwegwe:** We will not attend as a conference since there is a price on people of color.

**Glen Guyton**: Phoenix has about 596,000 Latinos and 94,000 African Americans living in the city. Many people of color live, work and worship there on a daily basis (including undocumented people). Many of the stories we hear about racial discrimination in Mennonite Church USA are happening throughout the United States, not [only] in Phoenix.

Sadly we don't have a Hispanic Mennonite congregation in a city where Latinos make up 40 percent of the population. Hopefully our learning experiences will help transform our church as people travel back to their hometowns.

**Michael Smith**: I will be in Phoenix for three basic reasons: I'm the delegate from my congregation; Phoenix is a place that greatly needs a prayer presence; I want to keep some focus on how we as a denomination can be more inclusive and evangelical.

However, I understand the decision of many people and organizations, like Christian Peacemaker Teams, not to attend, and I support them in that.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Beginning in July, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht will begin her two-year term as moderator of Mennonite Church USA—the first Latina to hold this office. She will be installed at the end of the July 1-5 Phoenix convention. Our cover story introduces this remarkable woman who fought her way to the front of the classroom while growing up in Chicago (page 12).

The 2011 choice of Phoenix for the convention site was a controversial one, and many people are sitting out this month's gathering. On our Facebook page, we asked about attendance. Some of those responses are posted above.

For our readers considering retirement, Edgar Stoesz offers advice on how to prepare with "Essentials for a Good Retirement" (page 26).

The news section leads off with some good news: Mennonite Church USA has planted 85 new churches in the past five years (page 32). The news section also reports on a delegation of Mennonite Church USA leaders who traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby elected officials to create "just and humane immigration reform" (page 33).

In News Analysis (page 44), Berry Friesen asks the church to "build discernment of social issues into the rhythms of the church."

Finally, Anna Groff addresses gluttony related to the use of social media and describes some changes she made in her lifestyle after establishing her "virtual weight index" (page 56).—*Editor*

## Phoenix convention numbers down

ELKHART, Ind.—On June 3, Mennonite Church USA's convention staff closed online registration for the July 1-5 gathering in Phoenix. According to Scott Hartman, convention planning coordinator, registration was 4,311 at that time. This is a 33 percent decline compared with the 6,420 registrants at the Pittsburgh convention in 2011.

Some of the decline is attributable to Iglesia Menonita Hispana deciding in 2011 that it would not participate because of Arizona's draconian immigration laws. Others are sitting out this convention to be in solidarity with Hispanic Mennonites vulnerable to Arizona's laws (see page 5). Other reasons for the decline include demographics (the declining number of Mennonite youth) and the distance from major Mennonite population centers in the eastern United States.

According to Hartman, 1,380 were registered for the adult convention, 2,754 for the youth convention, 79 for the junior youth convention and 98 children for their convention. The largest drop is in the adult convention, with 916 fewer registrants—a 40 percent decrease—compared with Pittsburgh 2011.—*Everett J. Thomas*

## MWC Executive Committee plans for assembly

AKRON, Pa.—The Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee met May 23-28 and toured the site of the next global assembly and imagined the global faith family worshipping and relating in that space. They explored ways to increase funding of MWC as a growing global movement.

The next global assembly—the 16th—will be July 21-26, 2015, at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pa. Organizers said they expect around 6,000 participants, and the site itself can handle up to 11,000. They said they will get a better idea of numbers once registration begins in August 2014.

The committee agreed to make "Walking With God" the assembly theme after several rounds of intense discussion. A smaller task group had proposed "Walking in the Light of God." Though some liked the biblical language, drawn from Isaiah, others saw "light of God" as "insider" language and wanted a theme that would communicate to people both inside and outside the church. Also in the discussion was a formulation emphasizing unity and diversity: "Many Members, One Body" or "Many Clans, One Tribe."

The Executive Committee also appointed the members of the Program Oversight Committee for the 2015 Assembly and heard plans for the Global Youth Summit—for youth aged 18 and over—which will be held July 17-19, 2015, at Messiah College near Harrisburg.—*MWC*

MCC photo by Sarah Adams

**MCC raises Syria crisis response goal to $1.5 million**

Zakaa Mohamad Khalid, a Syrian refugee, arrived in Lebanon about three months ago after fleeing from her burning home in Homs with nothing, not even documentation. Mennonite Central Committee provides material resources to many refugees like Khalid, helping them to retain some dignity as they adjust to living in refugee settlements.—*MCC*

## MC USA redesigns youth leader webpage

ELKHART, Ind.—A collection of 117 Bible studies written by college students for use by high school youth groups is one of several new features of Mennonite Church USA's revamped youth leaders webpage.

Between 2004 and 2009, Michele Hershberger, a Bible and Ministry faculty member at Hesston (Kan.) College, engaged students in her Christian Education and Intro to Youth Ministry classes in writing the Bible studies. Hershberger, colleague Carol Duerksen and students from LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, where Hershberger taught in 2009, also contributed to the collection.

Users of the site can also submit their own Bible studies for consideration for the collection via a link on the Bible studies page.

Other features of the revamped webpage include information about peace curriculum resources for youth groups; lists of conference youth ministry websites, Mennonite colleges and service opportunities; Scriptures/resources pertaining to selected social justice issues; and a link to a Facebook group for those who work with youth. —*Mennonite Church USA*

## German Mennonites award peace prize

GERMANY—Judy DaSilva, a First Nations woman from Grassy Narrows, Ontario, has been awarded the Michael Sattler Peace Prize from the German Mennonite Peace Committee.

"We want to award the prize to Judy DaSilva in order to honor the nonviolent resistance of the Grassy Narrows First Nation against the destruction of nature and for the preservation of their indigenous culture," said James Jakob Fehr of the German Mennonite Peace Committee at a May 20 ceremony.

DaSilva is a mother of five children and has organized countless youth gatherings, women's gatherings, protests, speaking tours and participated in blockades to advocate for justice and a healthy environment. Her humble, passionate and relentless advocacy has resulted in a suspension of logging on Grassy Narrows territory for nearly five years.—*Mennonite World Conference*

## Noam Chomsky interview available on CPT website

CHICAGO—A podcast interview with linguist, cognitive scientist, philosopher and radical truthteller Noam Chomsky is now available from a link on Christian Peacemaker Teams' website, cpt.org. Tim Nafziger, CPT interim assistant director, and Joanna Shenk, *Widening the Circle* editor, conduct the interview, which is followed by a discussion that includes Nafziger, Shenk and Mark Van Steenwyck, editor of Jesusradicals.com.

Chomsky and Nafziger discuss the 2005-2006 CPT hostage crisis. Chomsky was among the first internationally known personalities to sign a petition calling for the release of Tom Fox, James Loney, Harmeet Singh Sooden and Norman Kember when Iraqi militants kidnapped them in 2005. He has said in the past that CPT's work gives him hope.

Chomsky, Shenk and Nafziger devote much of their discussion to how grass-roots movements sustain themselves. All successful movements, Chomsky says, have in common ordinary people who know their struggle will not succeed in the near future but are committed to being a part of the struggle "for the long haul."

When asked about ways to empower leaders of movements Chomsky says he "shudders" when he hears the word "leader," because where there are leaders, there must be followers, and what the world really needs are participants. He notes that the principle of consensus can be co-opted by domineering people in grass-roots organizations who through the strength of their personality assemble followers and take over the group.—*CPT*

## Connecting Families holds annual retreat

MT. PLEASANT, Pa.—The 26th annual gathering of Connecting Families-East was held May 17-19 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. Connecting Families meets one weekend each year to connect families and individuals dealing with LGBT concerns and is associated with Brethren Mennonite Council. It welcomes families, individuals and supporters on a Christian journey seeking greater understanding of sexual minority concerns.

Sheri Hostetler, pastor of First Mennonite Church in San Francisco spoke on "Loving Our Neighbors as Ourselves." Worship was based on Genesis 38:12-19 and Mark 10:1-12. Several families shared coming-out stories.

Connecting Families-East will meet on May 16-18, 2014, at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. For more information, contact Ken Beam at kebe46@comcast.net—*Ken Beam*

MDS photo

**Mennonite Disaster Service at work in Oklahoma**

This house was damaged by a May 19 tornado that hit Shawnee, Okla. Mennonite Disaster Service had a crew with chainsaws and skid steers from the Oklahoma MDS unit on the ground May 22 cleaning up debris. MDS enjoys a long standing partnership with the Oklahoma Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster and anticipates working with partner agencies within VOAD to respond to this disaster as needed. —*MDS*

# Worth getting your heart broken

**Ron Adams** is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

I am a Doctor Who fan. For those benighted few who don't know, Doctor Who is a long-running British science fiction TV series produced by the BBC. The Doctor is a 900-year-old alien who travels through time and space with a human companion. They have adventures and meet scary things, and they run away. There is a lot of running away. And, inevitably, the human companion falls in love with the Doctor.

The Doctor is immortal—at least from a human perspective. This means his companions grow older while he does not. And sooner or later, the companions get left behind on earth. The Doctor cannot bear to watch them age and die.

Some companions welcome the return to a normal life. Others never recover from the loss. After traveling the stars, life on earth seems dull and colorless. For those companions, being left behind means a permanently broken heart. Most say, though, that despite the pain, they'd not change a thing. They'd not trade their time with the Doctor for anything. As one older and wiser companion said to her younger counterpart, "Some things are worth getting your heart broken for." Things like the Doctor.

Her advice may be bad grammatically, but it's great theologically. Some things are worth getting your heart broken for. Like the gospel.

While the world grows colder and more hardhearted, the reign of God remains a place of sacrifice and love, of justice and peace and inexhaustible mercy.

**What sets us apart from our culture**, or ought to, is our refusal to ignore the injustice in our society. The dominant message these days is that those who suffer deserve it. The poor are not poor because of unjust economics. They are lazy. The uninsured should just get better jobs. The homeless are in that mess because of dissolute living. The undocumented should head back over the border. And wasn't life better when everyone knew their place?

It used to be you had to listen to right-wing radio to get this kind of social analysis. Now it's everywhere. The clever couch it in the language of deficits and tough choices and austerity. The less clever shout their bigotry from the rooftops. And the sad truth is, much of this analysis is endorsed by people claiming to follow Jesus.

I worry that Christians in the United States have become so domesticated that we can't tell the difference between the gospel and the marketplace. I worry that we confuse our faith in Christ with our faith in democracy and capitalism. I worry that we are becoming more adept at justifying our silence through a false humility and our complicity through a self-serving distaste for partisan politics. I worry that we've chosen the broad path of complacency over the narrow road of the prophetic.

Doesn't Jesus call us to lives of service? To lives given over to the needs of others? Aren't we called to name injustice and to tell the truth about its consequences? Isn't that the same prophetic stance that got Jesus killed?

If we answer yes, we will find ourselves at odds with our society. Following Jesus means no more business as usual. It means preaching good news to the poor. It means speaking truth to the powers of this world. It means risking a broken heart.

**While the world grows colder** and more hardhearted, the reign of God remains a place of sacrifice and love, of justice and peace and inexhaustible mercy. We are called to inhabit that reign and reveal it by living out the gospel of Jesus.

It won't be easy. We've become so comfortable with our society's celebration of individualism and greed that it's going to hurt us to step away. We may see things that frighten us. We may want to run away. Right-thinking folks will ostracize us. Good Christian folks will condemn us. The powerful will ignore us. Politicians will seek to co-opt us. Our calling is not easy, but it is ours.

If we take that calling seriously, we will find ourselves outside the gates of the city, cut off from much that we've come to call the real world. That's going to hurt. It may even break our hearts. But then, some things are worth getting our hearts broken for. Like following Jesus. TM

# Not your typical Beachy Amish bishop

On the surface, Mario Ramon Quevedo may not fit your image of a Beachy Amish bishop. Raised as a Catholic in central Paraguay, Mario is more comfortable speaking Spanish or Guaraní than English. Moreover, his beard is not very full, he cannot trace his genealogy back to Switzerland, and his soft-spoken, gentle demeanor confounds the stereotype of bishops in conservative traditions. Yet the fact that Mario has been an ordained minister for more than 25 years and a senior bishop in the Beachy Amish church for the past decade testifies to the way Anabaptist-Mennonite convictions are finding expression in a beautiful variety of cultural forms.

In May, I taught the course Anabaptist-Mennonite History in Paraguay. Since Paraguay is home to at least 20 Anabaptist-related groups, the country is a microcosm of the diversity of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship. With 17 Goshen (Ind.) College students, we visited eight different groups in Paraguay. In each encounter we tried to deepen our understanding of the history of the group, the central convictions of their faith, the distinctive cultural forms they had adopted to express that faith, and the challenges of identity and witness they faced within the larger Paraguayan context.

**Behind our study was a deeper question**, one that has confronted followers of Jesus from the beginning of the Christian movement: How is the Word made flesh (John 1:1)? How is the good news of Jesus—a message of universal authority and appeal—incarnated within the particular cultural forms of the gathered church that bears his name? The call of Jesus always unsettles the culture in which it is proclaimed, yet Christian faith is always expressed in a particular culture.

Cultural identity—carried forward in language, folkways, communal practices, economic assumptions and ethical boundaries—can be a gift that enables a group to witness to the gospel in visible ways. But it can also be a burden that reinforces boundaries of race, class, status and power.

In the spring of 1967, when Paul and Amanda Eichorn, along with several other Beachy Amish families, left the comforts of Pennsylvania to establish a Christian community in the wilderness of eastern Paraguay, their goals were not entirely clear. Some were fleeing the temptations of modern society, others were interested in mission, and some, no doubt, were looking for economic opportunities and the promise of an adventure. Now, nearly 50 years later, the Luz y Esperanza colony seems to be doing well. The community is home to some 20 families, their farmlands are thriving and they are known throughout the region for their maternity clinic and their prison ministry. Throughout their sojourn in Paraguay, members of Luz y Esperanza have maintained a distinctive cultural identity—in outward appearance they appear similar to other conservative groups you might meet in northern Indiana or eastern Pennsylvania.

**But as we enjoyed an afternoon of softball**, singing and relaxed conversation, we were amazed at the many expressions of cross-cultural integration evident in the community. From the beginning, members of Luz y Esperanza were committed to becoming multilingual. Today, everyone in the community speaks at least three languages, and Laban Eichorn, one of the community's leaders, speaks no fewer than seven. As the linguistic barriers dissolved, the group quickly developed close friendships with their Latino Paraguayan and indigenous neighbors. Soon, members of the original Luz y Esperanza community married newcomers to their church, making Spanish—or occasionally Guaraní—the language of their households. With marriage came the adoption of new foods and cultural practices and a broader network of relationships with other Paraguayans.

Even more impressive was the fact that the Luz y Esperanza community looked to the first generation of converts for leadership. Thus it was that Mario Ramon Quevedo, some four years after his conversion, was ordained a minister and shortly thereafter selected by the lot as bishop of the congregation. In quiet Spanish, Mario expressed to our group his love for the church. "There are many people here who have more experience or education than I do," he said. "But I have been entrusted with the spiritual oversight of this church and I pray every day that God gives me wisdom for that task. It is not always easy, but we have learned to forgive each other."

The apostle Paul describes Jesus as the one who has "destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14) that separated Jews and Gentiles, making one body of a divided people. In a quiet way, that vision is being realized today in the community of Luz y Esperanza. TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

The call of Jesus always unsettles the culture in which it is proclaimed, yet Christian faith is always expressed in a particular culture.

# What if we treated gun crime as a disease?

Amid all the verbal furor over gun rights and crime, at least one state is having some success by treating gun crime as a disease. However, most states won't be able to follow suit.

Writing in the May/June issue of *Pacific Standard*, senior editor Vince Beiser discusses the Armed Prohibited Persons System, a program in which California officials comb through mountains of data to find people who have lost the right to own guns, then send agents to take those guns away. According to Beiser, "The agents are looking for people who bought guns legally but were later convicted of a felony, put under a restraining order or were deemed seriously mentally ill—any of which bar them from owning a firearm."

In California, that list includes almost 20,000 people who hold more than 38,000 handguns and 1,600 assault weapons. Last year, agents with the California Bureau of Firearms confiscated more than 2,000 illegally owned weapons.

This information exists in part because of the work of Garen Wintemute, a doctor and researcher at the University of California, Davis Medical Center. "He is one of a number of academics and activists," writes Beiser, "trying to get people to look at gun violence not just as a criminal-justice issue but as a public-health one."

"Whether it's cancer or traffic accidents, you ask the same questions," says Wintemute. "You identify the high-risk groups and then look for interventions."

**One such high-risk group** is pistol-owning ex-cons. "People with serious felony records are barred nationwide from owning guns," Beiser writes, "but research shows that such folks are nonetheless relatively likely to commit new crimes—with a gun."

Statistics support this. Federal data show that about 40 percent of felons surveyed who were convicted of gun-related offenses were prohibited from owning firearms when they committed the offense. Researchers studying people charged with homicides in Illinois found similar results.

This probably doesn't surprise anyone. What the prohibited-persons program does is pretty straightforward: It enforces existing laws by taking the guns away. And apparently, this works.

Wintemute and a team of researchers gathered records on people who bought handguns before a ban took effect in 1990 and those who tried to buy handguns after the ban but were turned down. Over the next three years, the researchers found, "the risk of committing new nonviolent crimes was about identical [for both groups]," Beiser writes. "But in the group that was banned from buying handguns, the risk of new gun and/or violent crimes went down by about 30 percent."

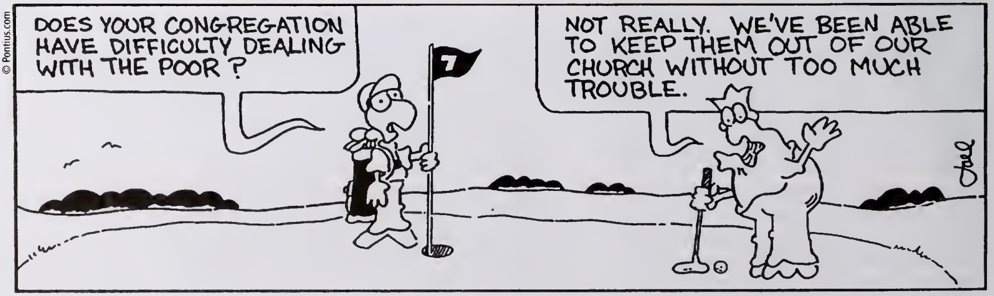
**These kinds of results** have a bipartisan appeal. The bill that created the program was introduced by a Republican and was supported by the National Rifle Association.

Wintemute estimates that as many as 180,000 people nationwide should be on a prohibited-persons list, but it's unlikely other states will set up similar programs. Why? "California is essentially the only state that has the data to make the program possible," Beiser writes.

For example, he writes, "California allows only licensed retailers to sell handguns—there's no 'gun-show loophole'—and has recorded those sales since 1996." And don't expect the federal government to set up a centralized gun-tracking system. It's prohibited by law from doing so.

While rhetoric flies around social media about gun rights, and though gun crime is a complex issue, there are rational approaches that have proven helpful in reducing it. Unfortunately, rationality rarely prevails in our polarizing culture.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle Joel Kauffmann


DOES YOUR CONGREGATION HAVE DIFFICULTY DEALING WITH THE POOR?
7
NOT REALLY. WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THEM OUT OF OUR CHURCH WITHOUT TOO MUCH TROUBLE.

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “Jesus taught that hating your neighbor is tantamount to hating God, yet some Christians hate their neighbors as a matter of policy and are busy hunting biblical justifications for doing so.”
>
> —*Wendell Berry in* The Christian Century

## Church whistleblowers join forces on abuse

They call themselves Catholic Whistleblowers, a newly formed cadre of priests and nuns who say the Roman Catholic Church is still protecting sexual predators. Although they know they could face repercussions, they have banded together to push the new pope to clean house and the American bishops to enforce the zero-tolerance policies they adopted more than a decade ago. Most in the steering group of 12 have blown the whistle on abusers in the past, and three are canon lawyers who once handled abuse cases on the church's behalf. Four say they were sexually abused as children.

Their aim, they say, is to support both victims and fellow whistle-blowers, and identify shortcomings in church policies. They hope to help not just minors but adults who fall prey to clergy who exploit their power for sex. They say that their motivation is to make the church better and safer and to show the world there are good priests and nuns in the church.—*New York Times*

**70%**

of home-owning Americans cannot park cars in their garages because there's too much stuff.

**10%**

of home-owning Americans has a storage unit.

—*Pacific Standard*

## Many people live with no buffer

Consider a household with a single earner and two children. Assume that the earner is in good health and manages to work a full 40 hours a week (the average work week of American workers is 34 hours) at a wage somewhat above the minimum, say, around $8.50 per hour, so that after paying his Social Security tax, he gets $8 per hour and thus receives $16,640 for his 2,080 hours. Assume he pays no income tax, but his employer charges him $200 a month for health insurance for his entire family and picks up the rest of the $550 per month cost of insurance. This brings his take-home pay to $14,240 a year. If he is lucky, he might be able to find a two-bedroom apartment (with utilities included) for $700 a month. This leaves him with $5,840 to cover all other family expenses for the year. Like most Americans, he may consider a car a basic necessity; insurance, gas, maintenance and depreciation in the vehicle could easily take up some $3,000. The family's remaining funds are $2,840—under $3 a day per person—to cover basic expenses such as food and clothing, not to mention things that make life worth living, like entertainment. If something goes wrong, there is simply no buffer.
—*The Marketplace*

## Gun violence 'a public health crisis'

Black clergy have launched a new coalition to fight gun violence, saying they are undeterred by the recent failure of legislation on Capitol Hill and all too aware of the problem of gun violence. At meetings held April 23 in Washington and Los Angeles, supporters of the African-American Church Gun Control Coalition called gun violence “both a sin and a public health crisis” and committed to a three-year action plan of advocacy, education and legislative responses.—*Religion News Service*

## Stressed pastors

Rising levels of stress are causing more depression among pastors. Stressors include declines in membership and contributions, personal financial worries (often due to educational debt) and discord in congregations. One of the top predictors of depression is social isolation. Pastors moving from hospital visits to funerals to weddings experience a range of unpredictable emotions—another indicator of depression. On the positive side, some counselors see an increase in the number of pastors who are willing to seek professional help and are open with their congregations about their emotional difficulties.—*Christian Century*

## Christian leaders oppose polarization

Twenty-five top Christian leaders gathered in the U.S. city with perhaps the worst reputation for civil discourse May 15 and committed themselves to elevating the level of public conversation. Meeting in a row house three blocks from the U.S. Capitol, the group spanned the Christian spectrum and included officials from liberal churches and the most conservative of interest groups.—*Religion News Service*

## Numbers to ponder

- Temperature in degrees Fahrenheit reached by prey-stunning bubbles shot from a pistol shrimp's claw: **8,500**
- Temperature in degrees Fahrenheit of the sun's surface: **9,980**
- Percentage of the banking industry's assets held by local community banks: **14**
- Percentage of small loans to businesses and farms that are made by local community banks: **46**—*Yes! Magazine*

**Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Mennonite Church USA's new moderator, has faced racism and sexism in her life.**

# A new journey

Soto Albrecht (right) talks with Kevin Ressler and Mindy Nolt, two of her students from Lancaster Theological Seminary. Photo by Emily Ralph

by Emily Ralph

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht challenged the congregation of Nueva Vida Norristown (Pa.) New Life Mennonite Church on May 5: "No more shunning, no more violence. It's a call for discernment in difficult issues. We must lead it. We must learn how to fight for unity."

As the first Latina to be appointed moderator of Mennonite Church USA, Soto Albrecht feels the pressure of a church facing the challenges of the 21st century: hot issues stirring up conflict, diverse expectations from diverse people, uncertainty about the future of the church.

Yet she is uniquely qualified to serve in such a time as this. "As a woman, there's always been a natural, organic sense that I can't pastor this beautiful church without making connections," she says. "Networking comes very naturally for me, and I want to be able to continue that in my role as moderator."

Nueva Vida was just one stop in what Soto Albrecht is calling her "journey to Phoenix" this summer: more than a month of traveling around the country to listen, network and meet the many people who make up Mennonite Church USA.

The members of Mennonite Church USA don't know how they are similar or different, Soto Albrecht says. "I will be the connector saying, 'This is the commonality, this is what keeps us together.'"

### La comunidad me ha llamado (A community calling me forth)

When Soto Albrecht was approached about becoming Mennonite Church USA's next moderator, she was fully prepared to say no. She had already been serving on the Executive Board for two years and knew that the volunteer role of moderator would take much sacrifice and extraordinary leadership.

"She struggled with balancing this commitment, her work and, most of all, her family," remembers Dionicio Acosta, a member of the Leadership Discernment Committee. "I was proud of her as a person, her discernment in the whole process, her desire to be there for her daughters." As a fellow Puerto Rican, Acosta was thrilled to call a Latina to the role of moderator. "I [was proud of] the amazing example she was leaving not just for her own daughters but for my daughters as well to see the church opening its doors for women in leadership."

"I was afraid," Soto Albrecht says. "Afraid of doing a lousy job. I had to take a step of faith and, with the little courage I had, say, 'I'm going to be obedient to you, God.'"

It had been while she was serving on the Executive Board that the denomination faced the difficult decision about whether or not to cancel or relocate their biennial convention in Phoenix, Ariz. Arizona had passed a sweeping anti-illegal-immigration law in April 2010 that included a provision that allowed law enforcement to stop and ask for papers from anyone they suspected of being an immigrant. Responses to the legislation were varied and passionate; leaders from Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) were adamant that they would not attend the convention if it were held in Phoenix.

Soto Albrecht traces the planned route for her journey this summer to Phoenix.
Photo by Emily Ralph

For Aldo Siahaan, pastor of Philadelphia Praise Center, the decision to hold the convention in Phoenix brought into question whether Mennonite immigrants mattered. Not attending the convention, says Siahaan, "is one of the ways we are showing our solidarity with our brothers and sisters who have been affected because of the immigration legislation."

Then, during the board's January 2011 meeting, when it was making a final decision about the convention's location, Soto Albrecht's name was nominated to be the next moderator-elect. "I thought to myself, This doesn't make sense. These two things don't go together," Soto Albrecht says with a laugh. "Then I realized that this was a reality I needed to live into."

Whether pastoring in Colombia or, later, working as a chaplain at Lancaster (Pa.) General Hospital or as coordinator of field education at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Soto Albrecht says, her calls to leadership have often been a direct result of "people believing in me and seeing things I can't see. Usually they're right. There is a community calling me forth, then there's God, and sometimes I'm the last one to get on board."

▶

### Fui desde sentada en la parte de atrás a (From sitting behind)

Her story reflects that of many other children who struggled through racist structures to make a life for themselves. Growing up in the racially charged atmosphere of Chicago in the 1960s, Soto Albrecht and other Puerto Rican children were relegated to the back of the classroom, where, knowing no English, they were neglected and passed to the next grade only because of social promotion.

When I see people who are rejected, I have to speak up, because I was rejected.—Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

Gordon Houser

Vision,
Healing & Hop
God calls us
to be followers
of Jesus Christ
and, by the power
of the Holy Spirit,
to grow
as communities
of grace, joy,
and peace,
so that
God's healing
and hope
flow through us

The social stigma was not extended to all newcomers—Italian immigrants were welcomed and celebrated, given seats at the front of the classroom and quickly integrated into the white social structures. Even as a child, Soto Albrecht noticed that these European immigrants soon learned English and did well academically while she, after six years of schooling, still could not read or write.

The direction of her life changed when her mother sent her to Puerto Rico in sixth grade to live with her aunt, an experienced teacher who determined right from the start that her niece would learn to read and write Spanish. After a single semester, Soto Albrecht had learned the skills she needed to take her education into her own hands. When she returned to Chicago, she refused to "sit behind" and found ways to wiggle her way into the middle of the classroom, where, within the space of only a few months, she taught herself to read English.

Even as her grades improved and she made a name for herself academically, the shame of her early years continued to haunt her. "When your education is stolen from you, you will always struggle," she says. "I felt handicapped, wanting to express these wonderful ideas flying through my soul and mind—how do I put this in words?" Her own experience has given her a passion to speak up for the marginalized. "When I see children whose education is stolen from them, I have to speak up—firmly," she says. "When I see people who are rejected, I have to speak up, because I was rejected. That's why I want to speak on behalf of the immigrants in this country."

### Deseo estudios teología (I want to study theology)

Soto Albrecht's family moved back to Puerto Rico when she was in middle school. After graduating from high school, she was accepted into the prestigious University of Puerto Rico, where she studied health education. When she finished her bachelor's degree, her mother pushed her to study medicine, but she responded, "No, Mommy—I want to study theology."

Her friends and neighbors couldn't understand why she would want to go to seminary. Was she trying to find a husband? But Soto Albrecht soaked up her classes, first for two years at Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, and finally finishing her degree at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. After seminary, she taught at Goshen (Ind.) College for three years in the Spanish degree program and worked for Mennonite Board of Education in fund-raising for minority education.

Soon she moved to Akron, Pa., to work for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) as assistant for its Latin America office. It was during this time that she met and married Frank, her husband. While their daughter Yentli was still an infant, the three of them moved to Bogotá, Colombia, to serve with the General Conference Mennonite Church's Commission on Overseas Mission (COM). They were joined two years later by Sara, their second daughter.

Soto Albrecht found her roles in Colombia, first for COM and later for MCC, and as pastor of Armenia Mennonite Church, to be fulfilling. During her second term with MCC, she completed her Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary, which allowed her to integrate her love for theology, health education and advocacy for women and children. In October 2004, she was ordained; the following summer, her family moved back to Lancaster.

The culture shock of returning to the United States was difficult. In Colombia, Soto Albrecht was respected as a minister and as a U.S. citizen; her ethnicity didn't matter. "I dreaded going back to Lancaster," she says. "I had suffered racism and sexism in the United States and didn't want to fight that battle again."

As she struggled to find her new identity in Lancaster, she was given the opportunity to take several units of Clinical Pastoral Education at Lancaster General Hospital. "CPE helped me become a better pastor and see my identity as a minister of the community at large, not just the Mennonite church," she says. She continued as an associate chaplain at LGH for seven years, resigning only to take on her role as moderator.

Soto Albrecht's pastoral gifts have also blessed the members of Laurel Street Mennonite Church, her home congregation, according to Janet Breneman, her pastor. "Her pastoral care and concern for others are always evident, especially for those in our congregation who come from afar and don't always and immediately feel at home among us," says Breneman. "In her new role as moderator, she will hold her mother and pastor heart in her hands."

### Camino a Phoenix (Journey to Phoenix)

Glen Guyton, director of convention planning for Mennonite Church USA, sees Soto Albrecht's appointment as a sign of hope to people of color. "It is proof that our denomination is changing in many ways," he says, "hopefully to a denomination that is more inclusive, more compassionate and led more by the Spirit."

Soto Albrecht, too, dreams that her time as moderator will help the members of Mennonite Church USA become a community of discernment, beginning first with herself and extending to all the members of the board.

"That's something I learned from my Pentecostal Mennonite upbringing in Puerto Rico," she says. "To be in tune with what God is doing and to be in the Spirit." Community discernment is messy and requires a commitment to unity, she says. "Among the beautiful diversity of different cultural and ethnic perspectives, different ways of doing community interpretation, we can still claim unity in Jesus Christ," she says. "Not just in a romantic, feel-good way but [in] how … we embrace our diversity as one body in Jesus."

It was Soto Albrecht's desire to celebrate the denomination's diversity and to listen to its unheard stories that led her to plan her journey to Phoenix. "I am realizing what a privilege I have as a citizen of the United States," she says. "I may not have power to make cultural institutional change, but I can speak."

After weekend trips to New York City and Philadelphia, Soto Albrecht, her husband Frank, and her communication team were to leave Lancaster at the end of June, arriving in Phoenix on July 5, the closing day of convention, when she will give the keynote address and receive her charge as moderator. After Phoenix, her team will travel up the West Coast and across America's heartlands.

"When we return, and I look back, I want to be able to say I was empowered by holding all these stories so that they inform and shape me as moderator," Soto Albrecht says. "I want to connect with and meet people I don't know but who I know are doing God's work. I want to be able, when I pray, to see people and faces, and I want to know they are praying for all the staff they have empowered to work on their behalf."

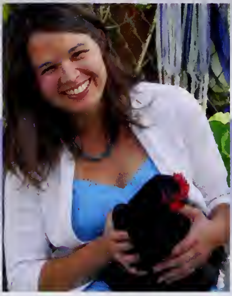
I want to be able to say I was empowered by holding all these stories so that they inform and shape me as moderator.—Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

Soto Albrecht will be documenting her journey on her website, journeywithelizabeth.com. While her journey begins with a single story—her own—she hopes that by the time she has finished her term as moderator she will have been able to collect 1,000 stories.

"This journey is not about me," she says. "God will be speaking to all of us." And though she will travel many miles this summer, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht realizes that her pilgrimage will not end in July; the real journey will have just begun.

*Emily Ralph is the associate director of communication for Franconia Conference and coordinator of journeywithelizabeth.com. She is a member of Salford Mennonite Church in Harleysville, Pa.*

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders



**Laura Glass-Hess** is in her second term as a board member of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference (PSMC). She is a member of the leadership team at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz. She previously served as a youth sponsor at her church as well.

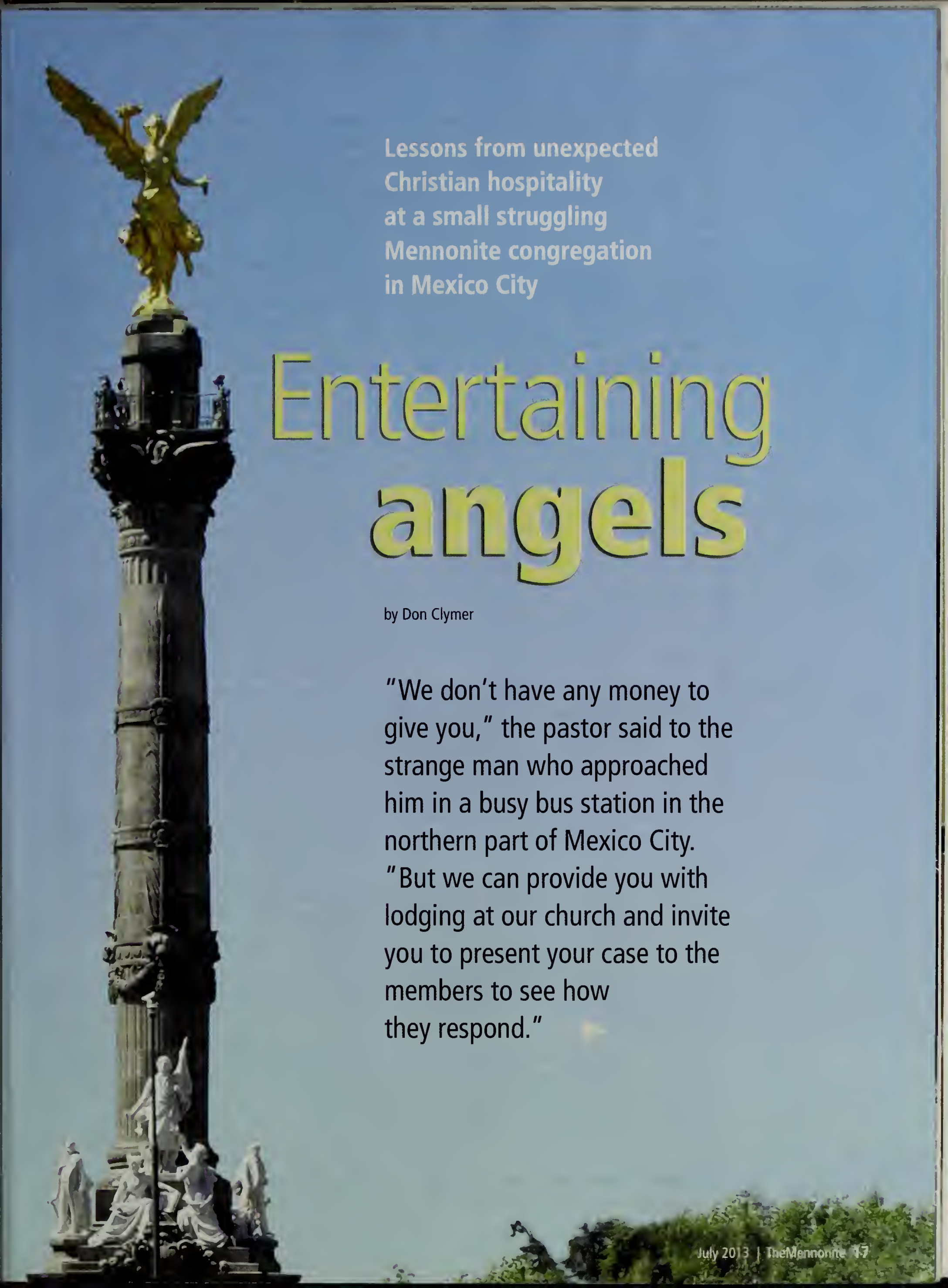
> The thing that encourages me in those times is the trust that others have given me.—Laura Glass-Hess

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**
I don't have any specific person that mentors me. However, I am fortunate to be surrounded by examples of women in leadership—women in PSMC churches who teach and provide vision—as well as my supervisor at work.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**
Although I have served as a youth sponsor in the past and continue to be involved with the youth, I do not currently serve as a formal mentor to any young women in the church.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**
I am incredibly fortunate to be a part of a community, time and place in which I have never been told that I could not be a leader because of my gender. My mother spent much of her young adult life being told what she could not do because she was a woman. I have not faced that. There is still a real gender disparity in leadership positions in the church as a whole, which can impose a barrier in subtler ways by not providing examples of women leaders.

**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**
Often I feel inadequate to the task of leadership. The thing that encourages me in those times is the trust that others have given me—the fact that wise and discerning people believed I could do it. That confidence from others is such a gift but also a responsibility.



Lessons from unexpected Christian hospitality at a small struggling Mennonite congregation in Mexico City

# Entertaining angels

by Don Clymer

"We don't have any money to give you," the pastor said to the strange man who approached him in a busy bus station in the northern part of Mexico City. "But we can provide you with lodging at our church and invite you to present your case to the members to see how they respond."

My wife and I were meeting Victor, the pastor of a small Mennonite congregation dwarfed among some 22 million people inhabiting Mexico City. We were with a group of 18 students from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va. Victor's church was hosting us for a week of working, worshiping and playing together.

The stranger spotted a Christian fish symbol on Victor's T-shirt and figured he would be more approachable than others in the crowded bus station. Slowly his story unfolded. His name was Abram, and he was on the way back to his family in Guatemala from the United States. He was completely broke when he arrived in Mexico City and was asking for money to buy a ticket home and for a meal to eat on the way.

Victor extended his invitation and promised to take up an offering for him with no guarantees on how much it would be.

Abram had been working in Charlottesville, Va., as a painter. He had entered the United States without papers and had numerous jobs in various cities until he finally settled in Charlottesville. He was doing well at his job but got into a bad crowd and spent most of his money partying and in general misbehavior. In desperation, he returned to the faith of his childhood, began attending a Latino church and recommitted his life to Jesus.

Just as he was beginning to turn his life around and make some economic strides, he received a call from his family in Guatemala. He was urgently needed back home to help resolve some family issues. He was really torn between family obligations and his newfound hope with steady employment and a changed lifestyle. Going back to Guatemala would probably mean never being able to return to the United States again; the risks of crossing the border without papers were too high. To ignore the pleas of his family went completely against his cultural sensibilities, so he decided to return to Guatemala, throwing away all his dreams of a better life.

**He returned over land, mostly by bus.** Somewhere along the way, all his money was stolen, and he ended up in a church-run refugee shelter in a U.S.-Mexico border town. By helping out around the shelter and with some donations from good people along the way, he was able to scrape together enough to buy a bus ticket to Mexico City. This is where his story coincided with ours.

To a person, our group had a great deal of trouble believing Abram's story. We figured he was pulling a major con job and was using the benevolence of a Christian brother with a fish symbol on his T-shirt to beg for money. Victor, on the other hand, did not bat an eyelash. He extended his invitation and promised to take up an offering for him with no guarantees on how much it would be. So Abram climbed on board the back of a pickup with a half-dozen students from our group to ride with us to the church of our destination.

It was remarkable enough that Victor offered this stranger hospitality at all. But his church was in the process of hosting 18 students and their two leaders for a week and was struggling financially to make their church budget reach. Didn't they have enough to do? Wouldn't the money raised to give to Abram be better used for the needs of the church? Weren't there other churches that could see to Abram's needs? These seem to be questions that were going through our American minds. I doubt any of them occurred to Victor, who lovingly invited Abram to accompany us on our adventure.

**"Share with the Lord's people** who are in need," says Romans 12:13, then continues, "Practice hospitality." In 1 Peter 4:9 we are admonished to "offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Victor embodied the essence of both these verses. Our troop of American sojourners was the ones doing the grumbling. What is it about our culture that makes us so suspicious? Why is it so difficult for most of us to extend the biblically mandated hospitality to strangers?

"Scripture is replete with references to … the stranger," writes W. David Buschart in his book *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality* (IVP Academic, 2006). These references include a clear call to offer hospitality to the stranger. "Hospitality extends the embrace of welcome," he writes. "Christian hospitality extends the embrace of Christ's welcome." We are called to offer hospitality to the stranger because of what God has done for us. In turn, the hospitality we offer is from God.

"When faced by a stranger, those who extend the embrace of hospitality have a keen awareness of God's hospitality toward them," writes Buschart. "Furthermore, this hospitality includes not only a sense of who they are (namely strangers) and what God has done (embraced them) but also an awareness that what they have to offer in hospitality is ultimately from God." Hospitality reaffirms our relationship to others and to God.

**In spite of our initial skepticism**, Abram soon endeared himself to our group. He ate meals with us at the church, worshiped with the congregation during several services and helped with the church's painting project. The coincidences were many. We had just been in Guatemala, the country to which he wanted to return. He had lived in Charlottesville, just over the mountains from where our students studied at EMU. He was a painter whose skills were needed at that particular time in the church. The better we got to know him, the more our skeptical attitudes faded away. When the special offering for Abram was received during the Wednesday evening service, most of our group walked forward to add their pesos to the love gift.

Although there was much less distrust among the Mexican Mennonites at the church than in our group as a whole, they, too, raised some questions when the special offering for Abram was announced. Victor, whose only motivation was Christian love, had a ready answer for the skeptics: "What he does with the money is on his conscience," he said. "We were asked to extend Christian hospitality to a stranger, so we did what Jesus would have done." Human motives are seldom completely pure. Extending hospitality in Jesus' name is.

A small offering basket for Abram was placed at the front of the church along with the normal offering basket during the Wednesday evening service. The money received for him was placed in an envelope and given to him after the service, no questions asked, no conditions imposed. According to the pastor who saw that he got to the bus station the next morning, the money Abram received was just enough to cover his bus trip and a meal along the way—exactly what he had asked for, no more, no less. He disappeared on to the bus in the early hours of the day, never to be heard from again.

**Our group learned a valuable lesson** in Christian hospitality during our time with pastor Victor's church in Prensa Nacional, a working-class neighborhood in northwestern Mexico City. The church almost unquestioningly took Abram in and offered him what they had in spite of few resources of their own. Through the church's acceptance of Abram, and through exposing us to Christian hospitality at its best, our group learned to love a suspicious stranger and learned to respond to that love without expecting anything in return. We also experienced God's love in action. Abram responded to our hospitality, and new friendships were forged through this encounter that will be forever etched in the minds of those of us who were there to experience it.

Hospitality reaffirms our relationship to others and to God.

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers," states Hebrews 13:2, "for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." For all we know, Abram was an angel.

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# Apprenticed to **Christ**

by C. Norman Kraus

## Disciples have an intimate, trusting relationship with Jesus.

Some years ago I attended an art exhibition in downtown Tokyo featuring the renowned American artist Clifton Karhu. Karhu himself was there, tall, clearly Caucasian, dressed in a traditional kimono. He had spent some 40 years in Japan, mastering the technique of Japanese woodblock print making. He became a disciple of the Japanese masters, and his ukiyoe style was flawless. His prints were clearly not American, yet I noted a subtle coloration that was not simply a literal copying of the centuries-old tradition. In the language of Luke 6:40, the apprentice/disciple Karhu had become so proficient in the tradition of his Japanese masters that he dared do more than a number painting imitation.

As I browsed his works, one of which we bought, and talked with him about his style, it became clearer to me what it means to be a "disciple" of the "master," Jesus and his tradition. In an individualistic culture in which copying and imitation are frowned on, where "painting outside the lines" is seen as a virtue, where expressing one's unique inner self is strongly encouraged, where each generation has its own moniker and where excelling one's teacher establishes one's unique identity, copying and imitation are not highly respected virtues. In such a culture the difference between literalistic copying and authentic imitation is difficult to recognize.

**New Testament culture** was a traditional culture that greatly respected those who by imitation mastered the tradition. Paul exhorted his converts in Philippi to imitate him as he imitated Christ (Philippians 3:17). When we use the language of discipleship, we must be careful to understand this cultural context of the New Testament. Two words are regularly translated master. One means teacher, and the other means social and political superior (lord) who has the power to control. A master may be a master of slaves or an accomplished teacher-example. Jesus is recognized as both "teacher and lord" (John 13:12-15), but in the role of "lord" he does not emphasize his right to dominate and dictate but rather to lead as a pioneer (Hebrews). Thus, to be a disciple is to "follow his lead."

Many years ago I heard a sermon entitled "The Style of the Man" that described the secret of Jesus' life and winsomeness. Discipleship is imitating this style of Jesus as an art apprentice follows the style of his or her master. Sometimes it has been described as a "WWJD"—What would Jesus do?—ethic. But following the literal commands of the New Testament does not constitute discipleship. It is not mimicking a moral pattern. Without the Spirit of Jesus, such literalism is not discipleship. And even the poorest achiever who sincerely follows the style of the master is a disciple. Discipleship must never be confused with moral discipline or saintly personality.

This style is often symbolized with a cross, but what are its characteristics that we should imitate? We cannot describe them with a moralistic set of practices. The overarching characteristic is agape, which really means respectful, compassionate justice—loving one's neighbor as oneself. According to Jesus' example, this included inclusive relationships that accept even the enemy as a neighbor and mutuality that prompts genuine willingness to share even out of poverty. Such mutuality implies more than charity; it requires social justice. It means living above and beyond the fear of death so that one's life is not determined by self-serving decisions. It means implicit trust in God as a heavenly Parent, which frees one to love as God loves. It means the kind of attitude and stance that inevitably led Jesus to the cross. Sometimes it is identified with following the Jesus way of nonviolence and peacebuilding. But without a spiritual appreciation of the style of Jesus, such practice becomes the stuff of well-intentioned politics. Even poor imitations in the spirit/style of Jesus are genuine discipleship.

Discipleship must never be confused with moral discipline or saintly personality.

**According to the Matthew version** of Luke 6:40, Jesus says "it is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher" (10: 25). Yet Jesus is reported to have promised his disciples that they "would do greater things" than he had done (John 14:12).

Karhu's works are a fine example of this principle in the art world. Imitation is not copycatting or cloning. It does not require the denial of one's unique identity and personality. It does not mean adopting an ancient, first-century worldview or social order. Rather, as the 16th-century Anabaptist Pilgram Marpeck emphasized, it means adopting the style of Jesus through embodying the Spirit/spirit of Jesus in our modern culture.

Disciples have an intimate, trusting relationship with Jesus. It requires appreciative evaluation of his style (spirit) and loyal commitment (faith). In some evangelical circles this is referred to as a personal relationship, but personal must mean more than pietistic or romantic intimacy. One apprentices oneself to him with the intent of learning his lifestyle. This was the longing of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:10). A disciple subjects her or himself to Jesus as master teacher and example dedicated to acquire his outlook and style.

*C. Norman Kraus is a member of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.*

We are called to be peacemakers in a gun culture.

# Blessed are the peacemakers

by Ronald E. Holland

## The absence of peace

When you Google "Peacemakers," two major categories pop up. The first is Matthew 5:9 from the Beatitudes. The second is the popular name of a 45 caliber six-shooter originally manufactured by Colt for the U.S. Army in the 1800s. This article is intended to prevent your confusing the two.

Get Well Soon!
We Love You!

This article is personal, theological, societal and both time sensitive and eternal. It's also somewhat political. Let me start with the personal. Of our six grandchildren, one is a kindergartner, one is in first grade, one is in second grade and one is in third grade. They have names. I don't want their names on the news or on memorials or on tombstones. Sandy Hook invaded my numbness on gun-weapon-firearm-violence issues. I'm all in and I'm tenacious.

First, let me tell you about my shotgun. It's a Winchester Model 12 (for 1912). It's a pump shotgun and was designed and manufactured for the U.S. Army for trench warfare during World War I. That version is on display in the World War I Museum in Kansas City, Mo. Beginning nearly a century ago, that gun was a military weapon, also used by riot police, and was used for those purposes for more than 50 years. It was used through the Korean and the Vietnam wars. It is still carried by some domestic riot police.

The gun will hold six shells. It was also manufactured and sold for hunting. For hunting migratory waterfowl, such as ducks, by federal law you can have only three shells in the gun. More than 30 years ago, my NRA gun safety instructor taught me how to make and use a plug for the magazine of my shotgun. The magazine must be disassembled to insert the plug, essentially a smoothed wooden dowel that displaces what would be an illegal number of shells. The plug makes the gun legal for hunting ducks.

For hunting ducks you have three shells in the gun. Not 100. Not 30. Not 10. Not six. Three. Please don't try to tell me that you can't restrict the size of gun magazines. The hypocrisy is that we protect our ducks better than we protect our children.

**Let me introduce you to a hand puppet.** This hand puppet is designed as a fuzzy green bullfrog. I call him Wayne. Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president and CEO of the National Rifle Association (NRA). Just to be sure you get it, this puppet is my bullfrog handgun puppet. You may arrange those nouns and modifiers in any order you wish: bull, frog, hand, gun, puppet. Wayne is nervous because he's never been in a peace church context before. You can't negotiate with a puppet. You can't reason with a bullfrog.

Wayne's real puppet masters are not visible. About half the income for the NRA comes from memberships. The other half comes from firearm, ammunition and "accessory" manufacturers. In addition, the Political Action Committees of the NRA have sources that our Congress in its wisdom has allowed to be hidden from public scrutiny. The NRA and its PACs are puppets for a whole other world of political pressure. How else could an organization with only 4 million members in a U.S. population of 314 million have so much control?

There are seven church denominations that have significantly more members than does the NRA. The Roman Catholic Church has 68 million members, then come the Southern Baptist Convention, the Mormon Church, the Church of God in Christ, the National Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. With only 4 million members, how does the NRA control half the U.S. Senate, the majority of the U.S. Congress and majorities in the legislatures of the red states? How else could they raise that much money? Who else would profit from this massive domestic arms race? The answer is, the military industrial complex.

The hypocrisy is that we protect our ducks better than we protect our children.

**Dwight David Eisenhower warned us** about the military industrial complex. Eisenhower warned us about political pressure from groups like the NRA and their puppet masters. That was half a century ago, in 1961, just as Eisenhower was turning the presidency over to John F. Kennedy, who became a victim of gun violence.

Here's part of Eisenhower's speech (1961): "Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, 3.5 million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all U.S. corporations.

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

I will not forget the intrusion of the military industrial complex into our domestic society here in the United States.

For me, this is also personal. I kick myself for being so numb to a half century of the rising power of the military industrial complex. Sandy Hook got to me in a way that all the other gun massacres did not. It was cumulative. I'm not the only one who's been numbed and silent. Numb no more. In my grief, I will never forget Sandy Hook Elementary School. In my double grief, I also will not forget the intrusion of the military industrial complex into our domestic society here in the United States.

**Being a peacemaker**

Now let's get creatively theological. The Beatitudes of Matthew 5 are among hundreds of beatitudes scattered through the Scriptures. A beatitude is an invocation of God's blessing on a person or a thought or a belief or a behavior. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). That blessing is placed by Matthew on the lips of Jesus. What is it we don't understand about being a child of God? What is it we don't understand about being peacemakers? Not the Colt six-gun kind of Peacemakers, the Jesus kind of peacemakers.

1. In the April 5 issue of *Mennonite World Review* John E. Sharp, instructor in history at Hesston (Kan.) College, offers a perspective on the origins of the Second Amendment. He sees it as a compromise offered by James Madison to allow slave states to keep their slave suppression militias. Weapons and the Second Amendment and oppression linked? Yes. There's a lot of talk abroad about the Second Amendment.

2. Get on the Internet and do your homework. Read the NRA's material on your senator and congressman's web page. Find out where they get their contributions.

3. On the Internet, tell your senators, representatives and state legislators what you think. Remember that you have company: 90 percent of us at least want to close the loopholes on background checks. Get with other peacemakers to brainstorm and organize.

4. There's good news: In April 1999, the voters of Missouri (a red state) turned down a concealed carry referendum. Later, the legislature overrode a gubernatorial veto to pass it over the voters' heads. The NRA doesn't win referendums. They control legislators.

5. There's good news: The recent gun-weapon legislation in the U.S. Senate did get a majority of the votes of the Senate (54 percent). The bullfrog puppet is losing its teeth.

6. When will peacemakers sponsor a gun buyback program?

7. Historical peacemakers. In 1948 in Johnson County, Kan., the South Park School was built for white kids. It's still there but now used for a church. Black kids were left in the old school, with outdoor privies and all the leftovers. Esther Brown, a 30-year-old Jewish white woman, led the black parents in forming a chapter of the NAACP. They brought attorney Elisha Scott and his sons from Topeka, Kan., and won in court—a precursor to Brown vs. Board of Education. One person like Esther Brown can do a great deal.

Peacemakers are neither silent nor passive. Peacemakers are creative and active and speak out. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

*Ronald Holland is interim pastor at Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan.*

### Names scratched on a bedroom wall

# Roll of honor

by Jonathan Larson

In a back bedroom of a concrete block dwelling at the edge of Gabarone, Botswana, two beds crowd the room. One is occupied at this late morning hour by an old woman. The other by a teenage girl. A visitor to the household who shows any concern at all would be invited to greet and perhaps pray for those who lie there in the shadows and in weakness. Those shadows are long and deep, for this is a season of AIDS. A household member, like some attending angel, stands silently by in the shadows.

You may note the dinginess of the walls or the joyless belongings, the rumple of blankets. The mustiness of the room begs for sunlight. You may note the helpless waiting of those who cannot afford the care of a western doctor or the miracle cures in the city pharmacies.

While you linger with these sobering thoughts, a song begins. "Morena, naya tumelo." ("Lord, give us faith.") What else, good Lord, do they have? A prayer is spoken, remembering the faithfulness of heaven. It recalls that though others may not know, hear or care, there is an ear pressed to the ragged edges of life, listening for the whisper from the shadows. The prayer dies away, and parting greetings are murmured.

Then, as the visitor turns to leave, a tiny shaft of light from the window reveals a telling detail on the wall. Written carefully there in pencil on the plaster is a short list of names and telephone numbers. The names are those they might call if ever a desperate need arises. They are names of those to whom it would mean something if they were ever in trouble. It is too dim to read them all, but one name I recognize: a friend of mine who is also known to this household.

There is a roll of this kind written somewhere in the beyond. It is not a long list, but it includes those who have shared heaven's compassion for the poor who lie in back bedrooms.

There is a roll of this kind written somewhere in the beyond. It is not a long list, but it includes those who have shared heaven's compassion for the poor who lie in back bedrooms. It is a list of those who are not so consumed with schedules that they may still be summoned at an hour of need by those who are not their own. The names are of those who are available not just in time but in heart.

That graffito on a dingy bedroom wall has left me with a yearning. It is my ambition that my name be written somewhere on such a wall.

*Jonathan Larson, author of* Making Friends Among the Taliban *(Herald Press, 2012), lives in Atlanta.*

Advice on how to prepare for retirement

# Essentials for a good retirement

© Marcia Widmer | 2012 TM photo contest entry

by Edgar Stoesz

Being good stewards of the body God has given us is our Christian responsibility.

Robert Browning said it so poignantly: “Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made. Our times are in his hand who saith, ‘A whole I planned, youth shows but half; Trust God: See all, nor be afraid.’ ”

This article is for those who are retired and those who have the foresight to plan for retirement.

Retirement is one of life’s realities, yet it is often ignored. Many dread it with such vehemence that in the end a premature death denies them of it. We can prepare for crossing over the abyss into that no man’s land some call retirement and in so doing make those golden years productive and enjoyable. My friend had it right when he said, “Edgar don’t put off retirement. You are at your best for the Lord after you retire.” So it was for him. So it is for me. And so I pray it will be for you.

**Health:** Health takes its rightful place at the head of the list. With health, we have options. Some comic has said, “The secret of long life is in choosing good parents.” Genes play a role in longevity, to be sure, but it is still true that many shorten their life span by neglect or misuse. Being good stewards of the body God has given us is our Christian responsibility. We can go only as far as our bodies will take us. We know what makes for good health; the secret is in mustering the discipline to do it.

**Attitude:** If health has a rival, it is attitude. Most of us are about as happy as we make up our minds to be. “A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22). A sign in some physical therapy departments speaks to us: “It is not what you’ve lost; it’s what you have left.” If we dread retirement, dread is what we are sure to get. If we plan for it, the retirement years can be the Indian summer of our life. In retirement we have the time to do the things we have long wanted to do. Make a list of them and then start doing them. And while you are doing them, more will appear.

**Financial freedom:** Financial freedom in the retirement years is the reward for having practiced discipline throughout life. Many think that when the funds are exhausted before the month has ended that the problem is on the earning side of the ledger. So they get a second job and in the process often also increase their expenses, leaving them with little net gain. My finding, and I have lived on a church salary all my life, is that the problem is as likely to be on the expenditure side. Your expenses, it has been said, must not exceed your income or your upkeep will be your downfall. It is as simple as that. There are exceptions, and I sympathize, but for most of us, a little self-denial together with a measure of God's blessings can bring financial freedom in the senior years—and how freeing that is!

**Activity:** We need something to do, something that motivates us to wrestle that bed off our backs in the morning. The loss many feel at retirement can be likened to chopping off a tree. Finished. We miss it terribly. But after a year or two some new shoots are seen growing from the remaining stump. Select one and foster it; it can become the next tree. We have gifts our job or career have not uncovered. In retirement they have space to grow. For some this can lead to a mini career, as it did for me. A sign over my desk reads, "Keep on using me, Lord, until you use me up." As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over until it's over." Age is just a number.

**Family and friends:** We need family and friends in retirement more than ever. We have invested a lot in these relationships, especially our children. For long our role was to do things for them. Now we reach a stage in life where we must also learn to be graceful recipients. A moment I cherish is when, after a restaurant meal, my son looked me in the eye and said, "Let this be my treat." My challenge was to receive his gesture with gratitude so he could enjoy being a cheerful giver. Isn't it great to learn to know our children as adults and to treat them as equals?

**From doing to being:** Other challenges that await us in our senior years include seeing value not only in doing but in being. I do not know how to respond when my grandson says, "Grandpa, you are my hero." Hero? Me? For what? What have I done to deserve that huge complement? I think he is trying to tell me, "Grandpa, relax. I love you for being who you are."

**Humor:** "Humor is another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation," said Victor Frankl. Aging goes a lot better when we can see life's unpleasant realities with a measure of humor. When President Lincoln was accused of being two-faced he replied, "If I had two faces, do you think I would be wearing this one?" Humor can brighten an otherwise dreary day. It can turn a scowl into a smile or even a laugh. Cultivate it. It is a gift. A hearty laugh is medicine for the soul.

Aging goes a lot better when we can see life's unpleasant realities with a measure of humor.

**Lifelong growing:** Aging undeniably carries with it losses—loss of physical strength, loss of memory, loss of friends through death. Failure to replace these losses with something of equal or greater value is what is known as aging. A live organism keeps on growing. So we make new friends. I planted a peach tree, not knowing if I will be here to eat its fruit. I read the classics I never had time to read, or if I read them they have receded in my memory. I learn to bake bread. Even in old age, "Our reach should exceed our grasp, or what is a heaven for?"

**Faith:** Many of us live with the thought—Or is it an illusion?—that we grow more spiritual, more Godlike, with age. I am not finding that to be the case. Some years ago I commissioned a sign to be placed above my desk that says, "Be patient, God is not finished with me yet." Though now having exceeded my biblical quota of three score and 10, I still feel unfinished. I feel the need to mature spiritually. In his helpful and readable book *Falling Upward*, Richard Rohr suggests that in the second half of life we hear the "deeper voice of God." We build a more mature spirituality on the failures and disappointment of the first half.

With the hymn writer we ask for "a faith that will not shrink. Though faced by many a foe. That will not tremble on the brink, of any earthly woe." We are emboldened to face our senior years with the promise, "I will never leave you or forsake you." What could be plainer?

Ah yes, Browning got it right. God planned a whole, "youth showed but half. Trust God: See all, nor be afraid."

*Edgar Stoesz is a member of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.*

# Walking with the Trinity

## It all comes down to movement.

by Ken Gingerich

I pretty much stopped believing in the Trinity a long time ago—at least in the traditional sense—where God is a white-haired old man who with his son Jesus and the Holy Ghost make up the Godhead. I can understand the discomfort Jews and Muslims have with it all. It didn't make sense to second-century Jews and later to eighth-century followers of Mohammed. It didn't make sense to the Deists who founded our country and whose spirituality was nourished by the 18th-century enlightenment—despite the wishes of modern-day revisionist Christian fundamentalists who claim the founders were something different.

It doesn't make sense in postmodernity, in the world of physical science and human psychology. It doesn't jibe with our dualistic, pluralistic and materialistic mindsets. It doesn't make sense to the Unitarians who worship up the street from Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church. It doesn't make sense to today's create your own religion, post-Christian, post-whatever sensibilities either.

But maybe that's not the purpose of it all anyway.

Just down the block and around the corner from the Taos casita I stayed in one month last year is a streetside holy place. It has little altars and memorials scattered among the trees and bushes. Fading signs and mottos are strung from low-hanging branches. Candles, faded flowers, statues, rock circles and other artifacts remind visitors that this unassuming empty lot is indeed a sacred space dedicated to the honor of the Holy Trinity.

I passed "Holy Trinity Park" on my daily morning and evening walks and felt within the rhythm of my breathing, my heartbeats and my footsteps the challenge that maybe a three-dimensional approach to understanding the nature of God actually does make some sense. Perhaps our experience of the holy can be known in three basic levels. When I was a kid, my mom suggested one way to comprehend the Trinity was to consider the way we perceive the properties of water, which we can recognize in different forms: as a frozen solid, as liquid and as vapor—it's still all water. Our spiritual ancestors simply used the realities and worldviews they had access to describe the almost indescribable. If I insist on using a literalist understanding of their reality, I'm missing an awesome and wondrous perspective.

> We are part of something wonderful and awesome that reaches back beyond the Big Bang or whatever we imagine the beginning of our reality to be.

**Creator (the solid ground of our being)**

Something made us—and the universe. Something cannot come from nothing. It is both other—beyond us—and within us. We may recognize this as the ground of our being or the unified field. Sometimes we call it holy—so holy in fact the Hebrews could only ascribe consonants to the word used to describe this "most high," YHWH. No wonder they took offense at Jesus' sense of familiarity with the Creator. Abba? Daddy God? Yet there is a longing for a reconnection with the mind that created us that we humans have intuitively understood since the dawn of consciousness, when we became aware of our individuality, of our separateness. It's called religion ("religar" in Latin means to reconnect). We are part of something wonderful and awesome that reaches back beyond the Big Bang or whatever we imagine the beginning of our reality to be. We are part of creation, too. Perhaps our essential task in life is to return, to draw near and remain under the protective wings, as it were, of our Creator. St. Augustine understood this impulse with his famous confession: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

**Child/man (washed in the flow of the Jordan)**

In the person of Jesus we at the very least have an archtype that allows the Creator to draw near. We only know this as we "do" the following of Jesus. I understand this as a kind of kinesthetic spirituality. We only "get it" when we move (as he did). No matter what one thinks about Jesus or what powers we ascribe to him, there is an undeniable connection (for me at least) that he gives me to what lies "beyond." There will always be arguments about the nature of Jesus/Christ—from prophet to savior, to messiah, to cosmic connection and numerous other possibilities in between. It may not really matter what we believe. I think it matters more in whom we trust. And if we really trust in what Jesus said and who he is; if we simply allow him to carry us, we are more able to make contact with the primordial ground of all that is. It is so much greater than the structural paradigms of Christianity (Christendom) we've created through the centuries. So much of what we (the church) have built over the past two millennia is a construct that actually denies the one Jesus represents and the truly radical and grace-filled life we have been invited into. Once the paradigms have been shattered, Jesus can actually become a (hu)man/savior for our age.

**Spirit/wind/baruch (the vapor of energy)**

The life force that ties it all together, that gives breath, that is essentially present in everything, I usually call Spirit. For me it is creativity pure and simple. It is unity. It is love. It is the power that combines 6 billion-year-old molecules or stardust into cells, muscles, skin, teeth, senses and intelligence to make us human, and to create so many other creatures and nature in general, no matter the process. Joseph Rael is a Picuras Pueblo holy man who teaches about the animated universe or the reality of vibration/life within everything—of every material aspect in the universe. It's not unlike the emerging chaos theory concept in physics that recognizes disorder, spontaneity and movement as a vital part of the creative force.

If we really trust in what Jesus said and who he is; if we simply allow him to carry us, we are more able to make contact with the primordial ground of all that is.

And it's true, scientifically, that everything we see contains movement of some sort, from subatomic particles rotating around a nucleus to the internal composition of the granite rocks and magnum rumbling beneath our feet to the billions of stars streaming through the universe. Everything moves. Everything is imbued with spirit. All creation is animated.

So we are all part of this incredible creation, and despite our physical demise, we will return to dust. We'll continue on in some form as part of the mountains, the skies, the stars—the universe—until we're drawn back into the arms of our creator in some fantastic future dimension. Everything is holy, including our whole selves, everything seen and unseen, what is tangible and what cannot be known or touched. It is an unfathomably deep mystery. I can only weep when I think about it.

It all comes down to movement. So maybe I can take the Holy Trinity and walk it out. Maybe I can feel the connections and reality of a three-dimensional perspective as I listen to the simple sound of my footsteps in the silence of the starry night.

Padda pum, padda pum, padda pum.

Someday I may even be willing to talk to a Unitarian about it.

*Ken Gingerich is a member of Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.*

# Our church's commitment on health-care access

**Larry Miller**, Goshen, Ind., is CEO of Everence, an agency of Mennonite Church USA.

For the past two decades our church has been concerned about access to health care in the United States. Mennonite Church USA delegates approved six resolutions on health-care access between 1992 and 2009.

Our concerns are rooted in biblical concerns for both healing and social justice. Our 2005 Healthcare Access Statement said the following:

**Because health is a gift from God and our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19), we seek to be better stewards of our health.

**Because our life together in Christian community is a foretaste of the kingdom of God** (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:37-47; 4:32-35; James 1:18-27), we commit ourselves to work toward adequate access to health care for all our brothers and sisters, including our pastors, in Mennonite Church USA.

**Because health and healing are part of God's mission to redeem brokenness in the world**, we will work with diligence as stewards of the gospel to provide better health-care access for our neighbors.

**Because the scriptural test of a just nation is how it treats its weakest members** (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24; Jeremiah 5:26-29), we will be clear and consistent advocates to policymakers on behalf of public health matters and access to health care for everyone.

Our church has been concerned for over 20 years about the problems that exist in our health-care system.

A primary concern is for the estimated 50 million people under age 65 who aren't covered by an employer-sponsored health plan and are uninsured. Many have medical conditions or lack financial resources.

In 2010, President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). It represents the most significant government expansion and regulatory overhaul of our nation's health-care system since the passage of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. This health-care reform aims to increase the number of people covered by health insurance and reduce health-care costs.

Many reform provisions affecting individuals become effective Jan. 1, 2014. What do they mean for church members and our neighbors? Here are the primary changes:

- Insurers will be prohibited from denying coverage due to existing medical conditions.
- People who don't get insurance will be charged an annual penalty.
- In participating states, eligibility for Medicaid coverage will be expanded based on income.
- Health-care exchanges will be created to sell insurance to individuals who may receive subsidized coverage, depending on their income.
- Employers with more than 50 employees will be required to provide coverage to employees or pay penalties.

It remains to be seen if health-care reform will be successful. Whether PPACA will lower costs is unknown. Here are other unknowns:

- Will church plans like our denomination's Corinthian Plan qualify as an exchange that offers subsidies? Everence is working with the Church Alliance on this. The Corinthian Plan will continue to cover pastors and church workers in 2014.
- Will employers drop health-insurance benefits, especially those with fewer than 50 employees? These employees will be able to still access coverage on exchanges.

Many things remain basically unchanged:

- Medicare and Medicare supplement coverage for older adults;
- partially self-insured health plans of many larger employers, including those administered by Everence and used by many church institutions, including The Corinthian Plan.

Our country has made many changes in health-care access and cost structure. Now it is taking a step to provide health-care access to those uninsured and to make coverage more affordable. Everence will help our members meet these changing insurance needs, including assistance for those with our individual and small group policies who are moving to new insurance plans.

Over 60 years ago, Everence began offering mutual aid plans so church members could help each other with medical costs. Over the years, church members changed how they accessed coverage, increasingly through employers, Medicare and individual policies. We changed our products and services to align with changing needs.

Our church has been concerned for over 20 years about the problems that exist in our health-care system. We are going along with the changes in our country, realizing they do not solve all the problems but hopefully move us forward in accomplishing better health-care access. TM

# MHS Alliance: A different perspective

**Luke Birky** is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

The April editorial on Mennonite Health Service Alliance's "homecoming" sure triggered a host of memories. I served under Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (MBMC) from 1943 (Civilian Public Service) until 1979 and on the board of directors of Mennonite Mental Health, Mennonite Mutual Aid and MCC's developmental disabilities committee for many years. So I am pleased with this proposal and with the tone of Everett Thomas' editorial.

But for me the facts behind the separation in the early 1980s are far more complex than Gene Yoder's statement that "it had everything to do with creating a firewall." This may not be completely accurate—at least it's not the whole story. I do not have the full picture either and wish some of our historians would piece some of this together for us.

Out of the CPS experience came a whole new understanding of who we were and the place of the body of Christ in the world.

**The issues are deep** and go way back and with changing understandings and values. Even the births of MBMC and MCC were not easy. It took the great famine in India to mobilize the church to concern itself with "outsiders." Then concern for the needs of our own aging brought forth the Mennonite Benevolent Board. By 1908, the Evangelizing Board and the Benevolent Board merged and became MBMC. But there remained a tension between those who thought the primary task of the church was to "evangelize" (i.e., save souls), "preserve the faith" (a more Amish position) or "serve the needy" (our own and/or our neighbors).

Then came World War II, Civilian Public Service and MCC. Out of the CPS experience came a whole new vision or maybe a whole new understanding of who we were and the place of the body of Christ in the world. This, coupled with the new understandings of science and faith and an expansion of higher education, brought new tensions and anxieties. But we also found we could work with each other (Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, Conservative Mennonite and other faith groups).

An underlying concern was what the church should "do." Is it to "save souls," "preach and proclaim," "pass out tracts" or "simply serve (respond to human need)"? We were almost schizophrenic—we wanted to serve and help relieve human suffering, but some questioned the value of having a person go to hell with a "full stomach." Should the focus be on "saving the soul first"?

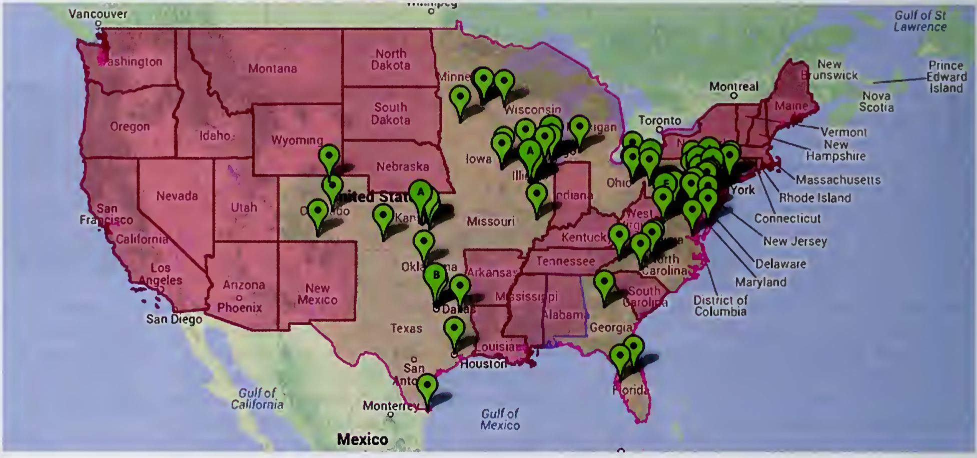
I had the wonderful privilege of working with some great leaders—John Moseman, J.D. Graber, Ernest Bennet, Orie Miller, Herman Andres, Vernon Neufeld and others—who somehow managed to work across some of the fault lines. I know little of the progress east of Ohio but did work closely with Allen Erb and know of some of the criticism he faced as he worked so hard to get the church to back a "community" hospital in La Junta, Colo., and started the School of Nursing there.

**While the need for a firewall** might have triggered the separation, there was also a strong push-back to the zeal and new vision of those who served in CPS and particularly the mental hospitals. The health-care institutions and the new highly trained health-care workers (including physicians, nurses, chaplains and administrators) had become too many, too sophisticated and the institutions too large to understand and control. And MBMC opted to become Mennonite Board of Missions—without the "Charities"—once more in the early 1980s.

I'm glad for the careful work done that I hope will bring the orphaned programs back into the fold, should the Phoenix delegates so decide.

Let me add that I chose to leave MBMC as Secretary of Health and Welfare in 1979 for two reasons—our aging parents in Oregon and my own felt need to allow new, better-trained people to lead—which they have done well, and I salute them. In Oregon I was privileged to serve as director of a fine retirement facility, serve as conference moderator and help start an MCC-related program for the developmentally disabled. What a privilege it has been! TM

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.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This interactive map on Mennonite Church USA's website identifies towns and cities where churches were planted from 2008-2013.

# 85 new congregations in last five years

## Area conferences support new faith communities across Mennonite Church USA.

In recent years, examinations of Mennonite Church USA demographics have focused on declining membership. But a recent list offers a new perspective.

A "snapshot" inventory compiled in March by Mennonite Church USA shows 85 new congregations since January 2008. The inventory, which is based on information shared by 17 of 21 area conferences, includes new church plants as well as several established congregations that have joined area conferences. It does not include memberships transferred among conferences.

Ervin Stutzman, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, says new churches effectively invite new people to follow Jesus in fellowship with the church.

"Over time, nearly all churches adopt ways of doing things that keep them from being relevant to some of the people in their communities," Stutzman says. "New worshiping communities can connect with their contexts in creative ways. Newer churches and older churches have a lot to learn from each other."

Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister of church planting—a staff position shared between Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board, identifies three main types of new Mennonite congregations:

- Immigrant congregations: Nearly half of the 85 new congregations are involved in bilingual or non-English ministry. Chenlo says these new Mennonites often have converted in the United States and tend to be more evangelistic.
- Congregations led by Baby Boomer Mennonites who were often previously involved in international service with Mennonite agencies. These congregations, Chenlo says, often focus on outreach toward the marginalized.
- Explicitly postmodern congregations that seek radical discipleship, inclusion and a strong desire for justice.

Warren Tyson, in his leadership roles with Atlantic Coast and Eastern District conferences, has been part of Atlantic Northeast Conferences (ANEC) of Mennonite Church USA—eight Mennonite conferences informally organized to support church planting. Tyson says leaders of new faith communities tend to exhibit passionate spirituality with an appreciation for risk-taking. Because of their commitment to Anabaptist theology, today's church planters apply themselves in their communities, creating connections and offering services that fulfill local needs.

For example, when a massive earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, Bernard Sejour already was part of Philadelphia's Haitian immigrant community. After the quake, Sejour visited hospitals, agencies and neighborhoods in Philadelphia, offering help and support as newcomers dealt with their post-traumatic stress. He did not usually mention that he was starting a congregation: Solidarity and Harmony Church in Philadelphia, part of Eastern District Conference. People came anyway.

"As a peace church, an Anabaptist church, we embrace the idea of service to the community," Sejour says.—*Ryan Miller for Mennonite Mission Network and Executive Board*

# Delegation visits Capitol Hill May 12-15

## Meets with Congressional representatives, advocates for immigration reform

On May 14-15, a delegation of Mennonite leaders with firsthand experience with the U.S. immigration system gathered in Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional representatives to advocate for just and humane immigration reform.

The delegation was cosponsored by Mennonite Church USA and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Washington Office.

"It was a historical event on many different levels," says Virgo Handojo, senior pastor at Grace Indonesian Christian Fellowship, Sierra Madre, Calif., and a participant in the delegation. "Personally, visiting Capitol Hill and knowing how our ideas and opinions can change the law of the country was really a humbling experience."

"The excitement was great in seeing all the gears and cogs of the American political machinery moving toward the long-awaited and much-needed immigration reform," says delegation participant Jaime Lázaro, pastor at Iglesia El Centro, Colorado Springs, Colo., which joined Mountain States Mennonite Conference in August 2012. "I was proud and awed to witness my denomination's genuine concern and involvement in these matters."

Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, noted the threefold importance of the delegation: It provided an opportunity for immigrant leaders to delve into the legislation and name concerns, give voice to immigrants, who are directly affected by the legislation and speak directly into the legislative process through meetings with congressional representatives.

Cristina Rodríguez Blough, a Mennonite Church USA intern who organized the gathering with de León-Hartshorn and Tammy Alexander, senior legislative associate for the MCC Washington Office, describes the delegation as a "powerful experience."

"We shared food, laughter and also deep concerns regarding our congregations, families and friends," she says. "I was humbled by the stories and wisdom that leaders brought to the table and before congressional representatives. To see such a diverse and lively group listen to each other and rejoice and mourn together gives me hope that people of faith will come together and speak up to encourage a common sense and compassionate immigration reform."

Participants spent the first day in the MCC Washington Office learning about the legislative process. A bipartisan bill for comprehensive immigration reform—S. 744: Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act—is under consideration in Congress. Alexander gave presentations on immigration reform proposals and broader church advocacy opportunities. MCC Washington Office staff members helped delegation participants identify talking points and issues to present to their congressional representatives and role-played visits with them.

Photo provided

From left: Saulo Padilla, director of the Office on Immigration Education for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries; Brandon Waggy, domestic policy intern for the MCC Washington Office; and Cristina Rodríguez Blough, participant in Mennonite Church USA/MCC's May 14–15 immigration delegation to Washington, D.C., outside the office of Senator Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.).

On the second day, delegation participants visited offices of the Senate and House of Representatives to let their representatives know what they would like to see in the immigration reform bill and why.

I was humbled by the stories and wisdom that leaders brought to the table and before congressional representatives.—Cristina Rodríguez Blough

"The initial training and coaching were excellent, enabling me to understand the real talking points in the bill," says Rev. Olufemi Fatunmbi, pastor of Royal Dominion International Church in Los Angeles and a delegation participant, adding that the lobbying role-plays led by MCC staff helped him "face the officials and make remarks not only with confidence but also respect and boldness."—*Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA*

# AMBS grads challenged to speak language of love

## Nineteen graduate from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary on May 25.

Mary E. Klassen

A commencement tradition for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., is for graduates to ring the brass bells they receive. These are replicas of the bell on the campus, which originated 145 years ago at the first Mennonite institution of higher learning in the United States.

Scripture was read in Greek and English, but graduates were challenged to speak in the language of love at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary commencement service on May 25 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Lydia Neufeld Harder, Th.D., used 1 Corinthians 13 as the foundation for her address, asking how graduates can share the message entrusted to them without becoming a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. She used a metaphor from theologian Walter Brueggemann to recommend that graduates learn to be bilingual, speaking different languages in different conversations.

Graduates have immersed themselves in the language of their faith community, knowing its power to shape them into disciples of Christ, Harder said. Now, as they move into different communities—in a new profession or new school or continuing in ministry with a new status as a graduate—Harder asked, What language do they borrow for the conversation beyond their spiritual home?

The pastor and former director of Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre answered the question from her own experience: “What I have gradually learned is that the language of love transcends differences … because it urges us to listen.” Harder challenged graduates to listen deeply and respectfully in the communities where they will serve. “The language of love creates mutual learning and true exchange of wisdom and insight,” she said.

Twelve of the 19 graduates earned the Master of Divinity degree, four the Master of Arts: Theological Studies, two the Master of Arts: Peace Studies, and one the Certificate in Theological Studies. Two of the graduates who completed the Master of Divinity degree also earned a Master of Social Work degree at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich., in a dual-degree program coordinated by the two schools.

One graduate has already returned to Ethiopia, where he oversees around 50 congregations and teaches at Meserete Kristos College. One graduate is originally from Ecuador and one is from Canada. The remaining graduates are from the United States. Six graduates have or are seeking pastoral ministry placements. Five have or are seeking ministry with church agencies and organizations. Two are pursuing Clinical Pastoral Education through the next year, and three are involved in ministry for people with health or disability issues. *—Mary E. Klassen of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

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# Bethel grads told to 'move the world'

## Eighty-five of 108 Bethel College graduates are from Kansas.

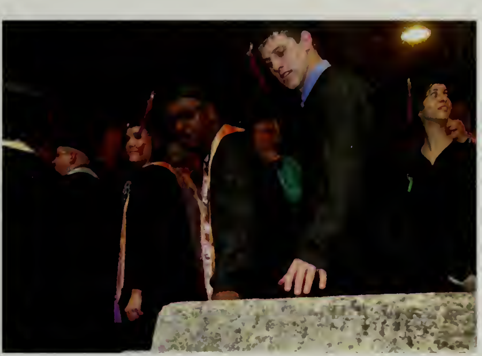
Weather forced some changes to Bethel College's 120th commencement May 19 in North Newton, Kan., but also put the newest capital improvement to the test, which it passed easily.

A large tornado menacing Wichita, Kan., and the accompanying severe weather 30 miles away in North Newton, right at the time scheduled for commencement, meant the 108 members of the Class of 2013 had to forgo both ceremonies in Thresher Stadium and the traditional march around the Green.

Maintenance staff carted one of the college's threshing stones into Memorial Hall, so the graduates could touch it, according to tradition, as they processed to their seats.

Up until the time it moved to Thresher Stadium, in 2008, commencement had been held for decades in Mem Hall, producing generations' worth of memories of the heat and humidity of a full auditorium.

Earlier this spring, however, the college installed air conditioning in both Mem Hall and adjacent Thresher Gym. This was its first use with a capacity crowd, and it worked perfectly.



Vada Snider

Because of the stormy weather, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., commencement had to be held indoors this year, making it harder for the graduating seniors to take their last touch of the threshing stone, but most managed it—here, from left, Nicholas Nyagah of Wichita, Kan., and Nathan Murphy of Newton, Kan.

Douglas Penner, Topeka, Kan., Bethel president from 1995 to 2002, who recently retired after 10 years as president of the Kansas Independent College Association and Fund, gave the commencement address, which he titled "You want to move a heavy boulder?"

Penner quoted the Greek mathematician Archimedes: "Give me a lever and a place to stand and I will move the world."

"Leverage, applied properly, dramatically [increases] your strength," Penner said. "The impact of a the best kind of college education, such as the one you got at Bethel, is that it's where the lever and the place to stand are developed."

The lever, Penner said, comes from classes in major and minor disciplines, electives and extracurriculars, that give students "the knowledge and the powerful tools to make a difference that you didn't have when you arrived."

However, he continued, "any good undergraduate institution can and should serve that lever function." What makes Bethel "distinctive from anywhere else you'd have chosen to study" is the second piece of the Archimedes quote, Penner said—the place to stand. It's shaped by Bethel's four core values of scholarship, service, discipleship and integrity.

Brad Born, vice president for academic affairs, introduced the Class of 2013 by citing a number of its characteristics, including the fact that 85 of the 108 graduates are from Kansas and that at least eight are taking voluntary service assignments starting within the next several months.
*—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

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# Love of animals part of academic pursuits

## Bethel College students conduct 'companion animal' research.

Courtesy photo

Shayne Runnion, student at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., with one of the many horses she's trained, starting at age 10.

Spring is senior seminar season at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. For some students, this spring was also a chance to apply their love of animals to both scholarly pursuits and the desire to help people. It's not unusual, of course, for animals to be part of senior research—from microorganisms to zebra fish to tons' worth of beef cattle. What was different this year was having "companion animals"—specifically horses, dogs and/or cats—as a vital component.

Shayne Runnion (above), a social work major, grew up on a farm/ranch near Phillipsburg, Kan., where she has been riding horses since she could walk and training them since she was 10. For her project, she studied five developmentally disabled clients of Horses to Humans of Wichita, which has a mission to help people "discover their own paths to healing and betterment through partnering with horses."

Her results, she says, proved her hypothesis that clients would appreciate this kind of therapy and recommend it for others.

Ashley Klein (right), Newton, Kan., is completing a double major in psychology and natural sciences. She set up the project with "the intention to look if the preference dogs have for their owners, in other studies, is toward humans in general or the owner specifically, compared to how they react in a situation with a stranger dog or another dog."
*—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

Vada Snider

Ashley Klein works with a Doberman mix puppy named Sadie at Caring Hands Human Society on behavior issues related to food aggression.

# Ark of Salvation finishes construction

## Everence loans money needed for Fort Myers, Fla., church to complete building.

Mark Farnwald

Children eagerly await their servings of cake as worshippers gather for fellowship and a meal after a dedication service for Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvacion's new church building in Fort Myers, Fla.

David and Madeline Maldonado weren't sure how the new church building they'd planned and hoped for was going to be finished.

The congregation they co-pastor—Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla.—was building a new worship facility after getting a loan through Church Extension Services.

Construction started in the spring of 2011 but stopped a few months later when the loan money ran out with only a shell of the structure built.

As they talked with Church Extension Services about the need for more funding, the Maldonados were advised to ask Everence about a church loan. Since then, Everence Association took over the administrative responsibilities of CES.

Everence agreed to loan the amount needed to finish the building to Ark of Salvation, as the church also is known, and managed the construction project. Everence is experienced in loaning money to churches for expansions, new buildings or other specific needs. When people buy annuities from Everence, they're supporting the church loan program.

Work resumed on the Ark of Salvation building in February 2012. The church's new home was ready in time for this year's Easter services.

The fact that David is a licensed commercial contractor helped when he and Madeline approached Everence for a loan, says J.B. Miller, Everence vice president of investment products.

"We worked closely with him and the congregation to assess the cost of finishing the project. We came up with a number," Miller says.

Madeline and David are deeply involved in Mennonite Church USA and in outreach in their community, which made this particular church loan all the more gratifying from the Everence perspective.

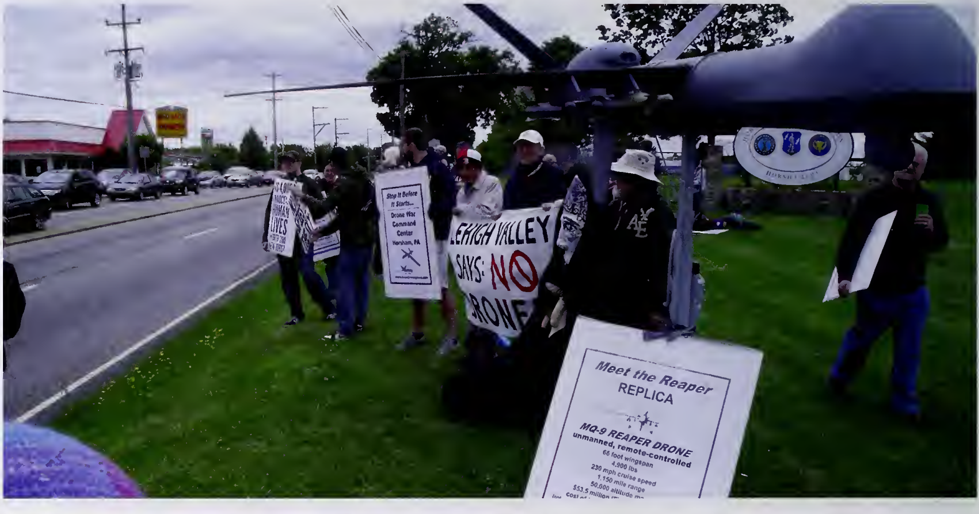
Ark of Salvation is "very engaged in the community," says Michael Horn, Everence director of charitable products and church loans. That emphasis on helping local residents with their day-to-day needs in addition to their spiritual lives was a factor in Everence granting the construction loan, Horn says.

Miller says, "The congregation will be a real anchor" in its neighborhood—even more so now because of the new building. Miller and Lehman were among those on hand for a dedication service at the new building on April 28. The congregation was formed in the mid-1980s. Worshippers formerly met in a house on the property where the new church was built. Weather permitting, services often took place outdoors. "It's nice to be able to put them in a building that can serve their needs better," says Horn.—*Jim Miller for Everence*

# Proposed drone center draws protests

## Three Mennonites from Lancaster, Pa., join witness in Horsham, Pa.

H.A. Penner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230 mph cruise speed
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Three Mennonites, one Church of the Brethren and one nondenominational person from Lancaster, Pa., participated in a protest at the proposed drone command center on the grounds of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base at Horsham, Pa.

The Pennsylvania state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs announced on March 19 that the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing, located at Horsham Air Guard Station, will take on ground control for the MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial system starting Oct. 1. On May 25, five people from the Lancaster, Pa., area joined dozens more to protest this development.

Sponsored by the Brandywine Peace Community, American Friends Service Committee and other peace and antiwar group, the rally was held at noon at the proposed drone command center on the grounds of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base at Horsham, Pa. Many held signs near a traffic light at the corner.

The names of over 100 children who have been killed by U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan and Yemen were read. A bell was tolled for the victims.

A 10-foot replica of the MQ-9 Reaper drone stood next to the intersection, shaking in the strong gusts of a cold wind.

The Reaper, which operators are scheduled to pilot remotely from Horsham, can be armed with four Hellfire missiles and a 500-pound bomb. This new drone command center is being promoted as adding a total of 250 military and civilian jobs to help the local economy. The next witness was scheduled for June 29 at noon.—*H.A. Penner*

H.A. Penner

DRONE CONTROL NOW!
WAR

Richard Boshart of Lebanon, Pa.

# Miller serves as police chaplain in Lancaster, Pa.

## Mellinger Mennonite Church pastor sees role as a 'welcome challenge.'

Photo provided

Pastor Joe Miller (right) and officer Sam Dillman of the East Lampeter Township Police Department in Lancaster County, Pa., on bike patrol. Miller serves as volunteer police chaplain.

Joe Miller, pastor of Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., has served as the volunteer police chaplain for the past nine years.

His work with the police department primarily involves accompanying officers on death notifications and relating to police officers.

Joe rides along with officers on patrol as a way to build relationships with members of the department.

He says that being a pacifist and a police chaplain has been a welcome challenge to think concretely about the use of force and especially lethal force.

"Hanging out with police officers has challenged me to live within the complex struggle between Jesus' call to love our enemies and to turn away from violence while also experiencing police officers as friends who are also struggling with the place of force in dealing with people who are violent," Miller says.

Miller continues: "When the police chief invited me to be their chaplain I told him I was a pacifist and would understand if he thought it would be better to invite another pastor to serve. The chief replied that he was open to a pacifist serving as their chaplain."—*Mellinger Mennonite Church*

# Phillies catcher meets Mennonite students

## Philadelphia Mennonite High School students hear Erik Kratz' advice.

Philadelphia Phillies catcher Erik Kratz, who hit a home run against the Cincinnati Reds in May, visited Philadelphia Mennonite High School on May 30.

Kratz grew up in Telford, Pa., and graduated from Mennonite schools.

He played baseball at Penn View Christian School, Souderton, Pa., and Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., and Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

He told the students in Philadelphia to be humble, pursue their dreams and practice, practice, practice.

"I am here today because of God's grace and because I worked hard. But I also know it could all be gone in an instant," he said.

He also spent time sharing about his wife and children.

Afterward, Erik signed autographs and spent time joking and laughing with students.—*Ron Tinsley of Philadelphia Mennonite High School*

Phillies
WELCOME
1977

Ron Tinsley

From left to right: Fred Kauffman, Philadelphia Mennonite High School board member; principal Barbara Moses; Phillies catcher Erik Kratz and two PMHS students

# Byler and Muñoz bonded by renewal

## Intersection of two lives sparks six weeks of praise at end of his life.

Photo provided

Connie Byler (front row, far right) enjoys spending time with her friends from La Encina.

Living in the same city, Connie Byler and Ramón Muñoz were strangers with different pasts but had more in common than one might guess: the need for renewal.

Muñoz lived in a community home called La Encina, "The Oak." He soaked up every household activity and learning workshop he could—except on the days he spent resting. His weakened immune system, a result of a life with AIDS, often kept Muñoz a prisoner of his bed.

La Encina is a home for people living with AIDS. Surrounded by a caring community, regular meals and medical attention, residents slowly improve their quality of life, although their brains or limbs may be permanently damaged. Although the AIDS virus doesn't directly attack the brain and limbs, it affects their health and function over time.

**On the other side of town live** Connie and Dennis, her husband. The couple has served with Mennonite Mission Network in Burgos, Spain, for the past 32 years. Connie provides spiritual companionship to people living with AIDS and serves as an elder at Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas, the United Anabaptist Communities in Burgos. Dennis is a writer and teaches in a Protestant seminary.

For years, Connie Byler had suffered from pain. Initially thought to be brought on by aging, doctors discovered that fibromyalgia and a degenerative disk disease were the actual causes. Skin cancer was another concern.

The effects of Muñoz and Byler's illnesses were more than physical. "I was figuratively 'going through hell while looking for heaven,' " Byler says, reflecting over the past years.

When she answered the phone one day, she learned that a man who lived at La Encina was dying. Byler volunteered there on Thursday mornings, and although she did not know the man well, she went immediately to the hospital.

It was Ramón Muñoz. Surrounded by his two sisters in the hospital bed, Muñoz was semicomatose and white as a sheet. Byler knew she had little time. After some small talk, she got down to the point.

"Ramón, are you ready to die?" Byler asked.

His eyes shot wide open in terror, and he cried out, "¿Estoy moriendo? Am I dying?"

"Ramón, you have time to seek God," Byler explained. "The Bible says that if you seek God to be close to him, God will seek to be close to you."

Muñoz was ready to live but not ready to go "home."

When Byler visited Muñoz two days later, he was sitting on the edge of his hospital bed, impatient to leave. Byler asked permission to pray with him, so they held hands and prayed together, thanking God for saving Muñoz from death.

**Muñoz suddenly interrupted Byler** and started praising God with fervor, full of thankfulness and joy. "God, no one has ever taught me to pray before," cried Muñoz, who had never been to church. "If you teach me, I will teach others."

Muñoz had encountered God; his immediate response was worship.

"I will never forget that moment," says Byler, who credits this experience with whetting her spiritual appetite for the Holy Spirit's movement in her life in a new way.

Through her encounter with Muñoz, Byler believes that God wants to remind Christians to move beyond the church walls.

"Sometimes, it's not about taking [people] to church to encounter God there, but as Christ is in us, people will have encounters with God on the streets and wherever they are," says Byler. Muñoz only lived six more weeks. Each day, he packed a sandwich and boarded a city bus that took him to a park bench downtown. From there, Muñoz watched the world go by. He enjoyed living but quickly became exhausted and spent the afternoon recuperating.

Each Thursday, Byler and Ramón prayed together—time that each valued. When Muñoz passed away, his life was celebrated with a quiet funeral planned by his peers at La Encina. To Byler, Muñoz's encounter was like seeing the "manifest glory of God" on earth. She is grateful to have been a part of it and hopes that bringing Christ's kingdom to earth will always be her passion.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Couple creating home for 'war children'

## Congregations in Spain respond to call for help from Ivory Coast.

Photo provided

Francisco (Paco) Castillo and Annette Zingbé and their children—Ariel, Tika and Daniel—are in Ivory Coast laying the groundwork for a home to welcome children who have grown up during a decade of civil war.

Annette Zingbé Castillo makes a home for children wherever she goes—often amid desperate conditions. Her current commitment is to bring healing to a generation of children whose lives have been ravaged by Ivory Coast's civil war, a conflict that spans the past decade.

Zingbé started working with homeless children 17 years ago in the West African country of Burkina Faso. In 2000, a year before beginning their biological family, Zingbé and her husband, Francisco (Paco) Castillo, opened the doors of La Casa Grande, a home in Benin, Burkina's neighbor to the south. In April, Zingbé began her trip home in a deeper sense. She returned to Ivory Coast, her birth country, to fulfill a ministry to which she was called as a child.

"I kept begging the Lord to allow me to gather abandoned children together and care for them," Zingbé says.

**As a young girl growing up in the city of Man,** located in the western part of Ivory Coast, Zingbé longed to reach out to street children in a way that would make a lasting difference in their lives. However, her family and her church community, where her father served as pastor, did not have the financial resources for such a ministry.

After four decades, God is answering Zingbé's childhood prayer. She, with her husband and their three children, are on their way to Man to make a home and provide vocational opportunities for those who have not known peace in their lifetimes.

"There are other agencies in Man helping educate and train 'war children' now that the wars are seemingly over. However, [we] are of the opinion that lives are not being changed, because Jesus is not part of the answer," Zingbé says.

**Zingbé and the children arrived** in Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan, in March, and Castillo joined them in early April. They have spent the past months completing mountains of paperwork required by the Ivorian government to register CerÁfrica, the agency through which they will work.

CerÁfrica, a not-for-profit organization, began three years ago when congregations in Spain responded to a call for help from the evangelical churches in Man. Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas (the Mennonite church in Burgos), a Mennonite Mission Network partner, is one of CerÁfrica's founding bodies. While waiting for the bureaucratic wheels to grind out documents, Zingbé is reaching out to kids through a neighborhood children's club on a mission station in Abidjan, located near a refugee camp.

Zingbé is not alone in feeling God's call on her life; Castillo also senses a clear leading to reach out to children without families. "After living in the hell of the drug world, I absorbed the love of God through the ministry of Christians," Castillo says. "Having been … healed by God, I received a vivid summons to work among marginalized people."—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mission Network*

# Infants born to HIV-positive mothers protected

## Mennonite Central Committee offers storytelling workshop in Indonesia.

Tia Sumihe

Ira Sianturi holds baby Ania, who does not have HIV, even though her mother had the disease. Sianturi, a volunteer with the Jayapura Support Group in Indonesia, a Mennonite Central Committee partner, helped Ania's mother adjust to her status.

In Papua, Indonesia, where indigenous people have been marginalized in their own land, learning to tell stories is one way to strengthen the voice of the people.

That's why Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) offered a storytelling workshop for 15 people selected by Papuan partner organizations last year. One of the people who took the storytelling class was Ira Sianturi, a pharmacist at a Papuan hospital, who is familiar with the growing problem of HIV and AIDS in Papua.

Although Sianturi is not indigenous, she works with indigenous people by volunteering with Jayapura Support Group, an MCC partner that supports people living with HIV and AIDS and helps educate people about the disease.

**After Sianturi took the storytelling workshop,** she wrote the following story about her work with the support group. MCC Indonesia staff member Tiya Sumihe translated the story, and MCC edited it for a western audience:

"When Fika went to the hospital to have her baby, she went through an HIV screening. Fika was HIV positive. The hospital recommended a Cesarean section to reduce the chances of transmitting HIV to the baby. (Fika's last name is not being used to protect her privacy.)

"For six weeks after she was born, baby Ania was given antiretroviral medicine to protect her from the virus she may have contracted, in spite of the precautions, during delivery or through breastfeeding. Then Fika had to bring Ania to me at the hospital pharmacy for medicine every two weeks for one year. As a volunteer for Jayapura Support Group, I wanted to help her.

"At first, it was very hard for me to approach her. There was a big wall between us. She did not want to talk about her HIV status or about her husband's status. I tried to break the wall between us by holding Ania, not only because I wanted to get her mother's attention but also because that little girl always smiled. I liked to hold her.

"From the attention I gave Ania, her mother began to open up. Fika talked about Ania and her other three children. Suddenly, we could laugh together about little things. Ania was getting bigger, healthy and so cute.

"When Fika sent me a text message asking for information, I knew there was no longer a wall between us.

"I introduced Fika to other women with children who had completed the medication program and did not develop HIV. I wanted Fika to see that the program has results and [that] a true hope is there. One year is not a short time to give the medicine to Ania. Fika needs a friend who knows her status and still accepts her.

"After [Fika spent] a single year in the support group, no one thought [she] would become brave enough to tell her husband about her status and to ask him to have an antibody test, but she did.

"Although Fika's husband's test result was negative, I saw he was not upset with her. They learned from the hospital HIV counselor that by staying on medicine and using protection, one partner can avoid giving it to the other. After they left, I even texted Fika to ask, and she said her husband could accept her.

"A few times after that I saw Fika and her husband walking together in Jayapura, holding hands like a couple falling in love. Once, I surprised them, and they shyly let go their hands.

"The relationship I have with Fika and her husband is not just as a patient-nurse but as brothers and sisters. I like this relationship.

"After a year, their little girl with round eyes and curly hair had an antibody test. The result: HIV negative. Ania is the 10th child who made it through the hospital's Mother to Child Transmission program without becoming HIV positive.

"I hope there will be more success stories and that all women will go through HIV screening before they deliver their babies. As the Jayapura Support Group logo states, 'From Fear to Hope.'

"Is HIV scary? Of course, but everything is possible. Ania proved it."—*Mennonite Central Committee staff*

# 20,000 women benefit from Penner Fund

## Grandparents' bequest inspires a new generation of philanthropists.

Women farmers in Ghana and international development interns will gain new opportunities to earn an income to support their families and to enhance their career prospects with a recent legacy gift to Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) from the estate of Willard and Elsie Penner.

Part of the $1.1 million bequest will support MEDA's GROW (Greater Rural Opportunities for Women) project in Ghana, aimed at improving food security for farmers in northern Ghana by helping women increase availability, access and use of nutritious food.

**The six-year project will reach out to 20,000** women and their families. The Penner gift will also fund five much-needed internships for U.S. students.

Internships provide graduating students with critical field experience for their chosen career. They are also an important talent pipeline for MEDA—seven current staff members began as interns.

The family is also creating the Willard and Elsie Penner Family Legacy Fund, to be invested for long-term impact. MEDA's Sarona Risk Capital Fund provides early stage capital, an important source of funding for young companies. SRCF invests in promising companies in developing countries with prospects of not only financial success but economic benefit to poor communities.

Last year, SRCF helped 14 million clients served by microfinance institutions and enterprises where MEDA has an investment.

> They believe in its mission of helping people support themselves rather than giving free donations.—Matthew Penner

"Both our parents and grandparents have been members and supporters of MEDA," says Matthew Penner. "They believe in its mission of helping people support themselves rather than giving free donations. As a farmer, I'm now inspired to learn more about how farmers in North America can reach out to farmers in developing countries to help them on the road to prosperity."

His sister, Elizabeth, who is starting a residency in internal medicine at Cornell University, recalls how her parents' and grandparents' commitment to help others through MEDA impressed her at a young age.

Upon graduating from high school, Elizabeth gave some of her graduation money to MEDA. "Even then, I felt that I had been very fortunate, and knowing what I did about MEDA, I felt it was a very admirable organization with a great cause."

The children of Willard and Elsie—Mary Scheve, Ann Foodman and Roland Penner—hope that sharing the story of their family's bequest will encourage others to consider how they, too, can make a gift that will keep working long after they're gone to rid the world of poverty.—*MEDA*

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# Five developments that shape our witness

## Friesen: Build discernment of social issues into the rhythms of the church.

For the young, time is dynamic and pregnant with possibilities. The lyrics of Bob Dylan said it well for my generation:

*Come gather 'round people*
*wherever you roam.*
*And admit that the waters*
*around you have grown.*
*And accept it that soon*
*you'll be drenched to the bone.*
*If your time to you*
*is worth savin'*
*then you better start swimmin'*
*or you'll sink like a stone*
*for the times they are a-changin'.*

As we grow older, the drama of change recedes to the hum-drum of routine. Time seems to flatten out and lose its dynamism. We are apt to join the writer of Ecclesiastes in saying,

*What has been is what will be*
*and what has been done is what will be done;*
*there is nothing new under the sun.*

**The times of Jesus**: Ecclesiastes isn't the only biblical text to express caution about getting caught up in the world's hype. In the Second Psalm, the writer describes God as laughing at the plans and conspiracies of kings. And some would even cite the words of Jesus in support of a flat view of time:

*But about that day and hour no one knows,*
*neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son,*
*but only the Father.*—Matthew 26:36

What is often overlooked in the quoting of those words, however, is the three-chapter discourse in which they are embedded. There, Jesus clearly tells his disciples that the times are changing. What has been is not what will be; life will not go on as it has been. And Jesus wants his disciples to get ready.

The setting for this teaching is Jerusalem and Jesus' prediction that the temple will be destroyed. The disciples ask when this event will occur. Jesus does not answer precisely but describes the social and political developments that will precede and follow that terrible day. As he continues, Jesus speaks more generally about the importance of watchfulness, diligence, preparation and risk taking. He ends with a description of the last judgment, when the nations of the earth will gather before the Human One in his glory.

As Jesus predicted, the temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire in 70 A.D. Many residents of Jerusalem were killed and most of the remainder dispersed. Matthew, writing soon after this calamity, tried to help distraught believers make sense of it all. Quoting apocalyptic words from the prophets about stars falling from the sky, Matthew validated the distress they were experiencing. But he also recalled these words from Jesus:

*Then the sign of the Human One will appear in*
*heaven,*
*and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn,*
*and they will see the Human One coming on the*
*clouds of heaven*
*with power and great glory.*

Much of what has made Mennonites distinctive through the centuries is rooted in our conviction that what Jesus promised in these words has already begun. That is, the glory of the crucified Human One is not only for the future but is here among us now, revealing deception, bringing down thrones and lifting up the lowly. By and large, this remains our conviction. But as we have become more fully integrated into the broader society, we are tempted to avoid specific applications that may be politically controversial.

**Discerning developments in our time**: In the course of his teaching in Matthew 23-25, Jesus said this:

*From the fig tree learn its lesson:*
*as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts*
*forth its leaves,*
*you know that summer is near.*
*So also, when you see all these things,*
*you know that he is near, at the very gates.*

These are words for the church. Notwithstanding the risk of controversy, Jesus is telling us to discern the times in which we are living and ready ourselves to participate in the glory of the One who has made this world his own. Where to begin? Among the many possibilities, I suggest five broad historical developments that for good or ill are shaping our witness to Jesus Christ.

**1. Globalization**: Our heightened sense of economic interdependence and the declining importance of international borders have opened the way to improved living conditions for many. One indicator is increased life expectancy; infant mortality has dropped by more than half since 1990 due to a sharp decline in malnutrition and infectious disease. Another positive indicator is the decline in the number of people living in severe poverty (less than $1.25 per day), dropping from 1.8 billion to 1.2 billion over the past 20 years.

But globalization also is fueling income inequality and the loss of local sustainability. Since 1992, over half of total income growth in the United States (52 percent) has been captured by the top 1 percent of households, according to economist Emmanuel Saez. During the recovery of 2009-10, the share of income growth captured by the top 1 percent was an astonishing 93 percent. And globalization has been devastating for many independent producers, such as Mexican corn farmers or Egyptian textile makers, who find it impossible to compete in markets dominated by multinational entities. For these producers, prosperity can be achieved only by giving up their independence and accepting the terms and conditions of broader corporate structures.

**2. Digital revolution**: As digital technology becomes less expensive to produce, it is reaching into every corner of the world. Now anyone can be a reporter, anyone can have a bank account, anyone can be an entrepreneur. The benefits flow beyond the individuals involved; open communication lines and shared knowledge are powerful forms of social capital that make communities more resilient and local economies more productive and free of corruption.

The digital revolution also is driving a new generation of smart machines into the workplace. Dr. Jay Parrish, a Mennonite who teaches classes in drone-related technology at Penn State University, described aspects of this development in two 2012 lectures in Lancaster, Pa. While acknowledging the terror that weaponized drones have injected into Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, Parrish also noted the many benefits "flying robots" can provide in agriculture, natural resource management, disaster and fire response, architectural restoration and even pizza delivery. The FAA projects that as early as 2020, 30,000 drones will be flying in U.S. skies.

**3. Continuous war**: Speaking generally, the times we are living in are much less violent than the first half of the 20th century. Steven Pinker, author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature—Why Violence Has Declined*, suggests we may be living in the most peaceable era in human existence. The primary exceptions to this generalization over the past 20 years are Muslim nations: Palestine, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Iran and Syria.

Nevertheless, the mentality within the United States, equipped by half the world's military capacity, has shifted toward a more aggressive military stance. An official state of emergency has been in place since 9/11, and both recent presidents have emphasized we are at war and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Given traditional U.S. reluctance to become enmeshed in international disputes, national elections during times of war have usually produced a "peace" candidate. But that wasn't the case in 2012, as both major party candidates seemed eager to demonstrate their warmaking resolve. Increasingly, the preferred method of military engagement involves covert operations conducted in league with shadowy militants who behave much like "terrorists" (depending on who is doing the describing) to effect "regime change." Often what remains after the change in leadership is a failed state that cannot protect its own citizens but is ready and willing to conduct business with Western corporations.

**4. Erosion of the rule of law**: In the post-World War II era, Western democracies took pride in holding the powerful accountable to established standards of conduct. During the past decade, however, this commitment seems to be waning, at least in the United States. No one has been held accountable for the security failures on 9/11, the anthrax attacks or illegal Iraqi war that followed, or the Wall Street fraud that nearly pushed the world economy over the brink. Meanwhile, the United States continues to imprison a higher share of its ordinary citizens than any other country in the world.

In Congress, legislators of both parties have lined up to pass laws authorizing the military to detain U.S. residents indefinitely based solely on the order of the President. Congress also has authorized secret government agencies to monitor our communications without first obtaining a warrant. While similar powers have been authorized previously in our history during times of crisis, they have always been rescinded promptly after the crisis passed. Now, vague references to "terrorism" are sufficient to justify making such powers permanent.

**5. Global warming**: After a decade when discussion of global warming was marginalized, extreme weather is pushing the debate back to the fore. While a few continue to insist that the warming of the earth is "natural," the focus for most has shifted to what we can do to slow the rise in temperature. Here technological innovation offers a significant opportunity to decrease our use of fossil fuels and move toward sustainable sources of energy.

Bill McKibben, the environmentalist who launched www.350.org, describes the urgency of this shift. It entails not merely burning fossil fuels more slowly but leaving 80 percent of proven reserves locked away permanently underground. If we burn those reserves, as the energy companies are betting we will, much of the earth will become uninhabitable by the time today's children reach retirement age. Already, we see some of the super-rich preparing for such a dystopian future by seceding from the responsibilities of citizenship and retreating into private worlds of their own.

**Making it happen**: Discerning the times isn't a solitary task; it requires a communal process that draws on a range of experiences and perspectives. It shouldn't be an ad hoc endeavor, dabbled in occasionally and without accountability. And because it invariably touches on matters of political sensitivity, it isn't for the fainthearted. Yet for a missional church—one convinced that only the power of the Human One can save us—discernment can contribute mightily to the watchfulness, diligence, preparation and risk taking to which Jesus has called us.

When we gather in Phoenix in July, the convention agenda could include a plan to build discernment more intentionally around broad social developments into the rhythms of the church. Given all that is at stake, the time has come for such a step.—*Berry Friesen of Lancaster, Pa.*

# Zulu and Afrikaans pastors develop friendship

## Anabaptist Network in South Africa opened space for honest sharing.

An emerging friendship between Mzwandile Nkutha, a black Zulu pastor, and Cobus van Wyngaard, a white Afrikaans pastor, through the Anabaptist Network in South Africa (ANiSA), demonstrates in a small way the hopeful possibility of overcoming deeply rooted racial prejudices in South Africa.

"ANiSA opened up a space where we could talk, share about our backgrounds in an honest and open way, [more] than perhaps we could elsewhere," Nkutha says.

Nkutha grew up just outside Johannesburg in Soweto, the largest black township in South Africa, while van Wyngaard grew up in Swaziland and South Africa. Although van Wyngaard's family challenged apartheid, as white people they benefited from their place of privilege. Today, official restrictions no longer require segregated living. However, post-apartheid South Africa continues to wrestle with the residue of its historical mind-set.

Both Nkutha and van Wyngaard were formed by faith. Nkutha is now a pastor of a Vineyard church. Van Wyngaard is a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, which wrestles with its historic affiliation with the apartheid government and its policies—thus, in historical conflict with the black evangelical church.

**Given South Africa's history and its ongoing** reality of interracial relationships, there are several hurdles in the way of reconciliation, let alone friendship, between Nkutha and van Wyngaard and others like them. The two pastors met at the first ANiSA Dialogue in April 2011. Listening to one another's stories sparked openness between them.

"As we got to know one another, we found ourselves living out a similar story," Nkutha says. "We have been exploring what it might look like to have the church demonstrate something different within our society."

Nkutha and van Wyngaard find themselves moving outside their theological traditions, discovering common ground within the Anabaptist story, witness and theology. According to Nkutha, the South African church finds itself in a compromised position, given its historic and ongoing relationship with the state.

"The Anabaptist story [provides] an alternative model as to what it means to live as kingdom political people instead of tying itself with the political agenda of a particular party or state," Nkutha says. Van Wyngaard was drawn to Anabaptism because of its strong emphasis on nonviolence. Yet as he continues his journey, he has come to recognize that Anabaptism has provided an alternative way for people to think and believe and alternative ways for the church to relate to the state. These ways do not allow the status quo of injustice and oppression to continue.

"In the new South Africa, we are all supposed to like each other. However, we are not supposed to interact with each other," van Wyngaard says. "ANiSA provides a space that connects people."

ANiSA, an initiative of Mennonite Church Canada, is supported by a partnership that includes Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and Mennonite Mission Network.—*Andrew Suderman of Mennonite Church Canada*

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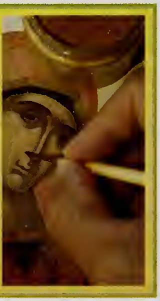

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## CALENDAR

Jubilee Celebration: **First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Ill.**, is planning a ***50th anniversary reunion weekend*** on July 26-28. All former attendees are warmly invited to return for a weekend of fellowship, worship, service, and music. Check out information on www.fmc-cu.org/ or call the church at 217-367-5353.

The ***annual public meeting*** of **The Casselman Historians** is scheduled for Sept. 20 and 21 at Maple Glen Mennonite Church. Karl Westmeier will be dealing with the Amish of Waldeck and related areas in Germany in the Late 1700s and early 1800s. James L. Yoder of Grantsville, Maryland, will speak on the connections of those immigrants from Waldeck and the surrounding area who came to or passed through the Casselman Valley of Somerset County, Pa., and Garrett County, Md. The public is invited to these sessions. For further information, including schedules and introduction to speakers, contact Alice Orendorf at 301-245-4326 or 301-501-4326 or abcdefor@verizon.net or The Casselman Historians, PO Box 591, Grantsville, MD 21536.

## WORKERS

**Sensenig, Kenneth**, was ordained for ministry with Mennonite Central Committee at Red Run Mennonite Church, Denver, Pa., on April 28.

**Brody, Robert**, was licensed as lead pastor at New Danville Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 2.

**Lehman, Philip Ray**, was ordained as minister of music and outreach at Waynesboro Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., on May 5.

## OBITUARIES

**Beck, Elizabeth Schrock**, 88, Goshen, Ind., died April 3. Spouse: Orval Beck (deceased). Parents: David and Mattie Yoder Schrock. Children: Gregory, Duane, Max, Kathleen Martin, Nedra Gnagey; 15 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 10 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

**Blosser, Glenn**, 87, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 22. Spouse: Mary Rich Blosser. Parents: Paul and Grace Hostetler Blosser. Children: Gary, Larry; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Gehman, Gladys M. Lehman**, 92, Mount Joy, Pa., died May 4. Spouse: Harold M. Gehman (deceased). Parents: Walter and Anna Lehman. Children: David E., Edward D., Rachel Dawn Gehman, James, John; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Andrew T. Scheid Funeral Home, Millersville, Pa.

**Goering, Emil Leslie**, 85, Topeka, Kan., died Jan. 7. Spouse: Lavina Mae Ediger Goering (deceased). Parents: Jonathan J. and Katie Zerger Goering. Children: Beth Tanner, Michael, Les, Thomas, Jonas; 10 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 19 at Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka.

**Gratzer, Elisabeth Andres**, 98, Bluffton, Ohio, died March 20. Parents: Franz and Elisabeth Riess Andres. Child: Heidrun Awad; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Hampton, Lillian Ely**, 99, Weyers Cave, Va., died April 16. Spouse: Wade Kenneth Hampton (deceased). Parents: Harry and Elsie Ely. Children: Susan B. Hampton, Leonard; three grandchildren; one great-grand-daughter. Funeral: April 19 at Kyger Funeral Home Chapel, Harrisonburg Va.

**Heisey, James Wilmer**, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 5. Spouse: Velma Climenhaga Heisey. Parents: Paul Wolgemuth Heisey and Katie Musser Hess Heisey. Children: Paul, Nancy Heisey Longacre, Mary Jane Heisey Harnden; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Memorial service: May 8 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Hunsecker, Wilmer Aidin**, 93, Walkersville, Md., died March 30, of complications following a stroke. Spouse: Dorothy Elizabeth Lehman Hunsecker. Parents: Charles Norman Hunsecker and Mary Emma Ebersole Hunsecker. Children: Phyllis, Linda, Carol Ann; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Chambersburg Mennonite Church, Chambersburg, Pa.

**Janzen, Henry H.**, 92, Newton, Kan., died May 11. Spouse: Laura Balzer Janzen (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Matilda Schmidt Janzen. Children: Sandra Lanzrath, Susan Shelley; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 14 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

**Keim, Ray**, 87, Goshen, Ind., died April 20. Spouse Clara Bontrager Keim. Parents: Abe and Susan Troyer Keim. Children: Paul, Mark, John, Beth Ropp, David; 13 grandchildren. Funeral: April 28 at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**King, Carol Jean Short**, 80, Archbold, Ohio, died May 6. Spouse: Marlin King (deceased). Parents: Sylvan R. and Pluma Yoder Short. Children: Terry, Patsy Unruh, Rhonda Nafziger, Jill, Kurt, Kay; 10 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 11 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**King, Ivan W.**, 87, Archbold, Ohio, died May 6. Spouse: Shirley Graber King. Parents: Clarence L. and Emma Wyse King. Children: Jane Sauder, Cheryl Grime, Sandu Cowell, Lori Aeschliman; 11 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 9 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**Krahn, Jacob P.**, 75, Reedley, Calif., died May 12. Spouse: Kathleen Cairns Krahn. Parents: John and Helen Krahn. Children: Robert, Karey Krahn-Benner; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Reedley MB Church.

**Lais, Larry Eugene**, 80, Hesston, Kan., died April 30. Spouse: Thelma Brenneman Lais. Parents: Mary Lais. Children: Lynn, Cindy Lais, Randall; seven grandchildren. Funeral: May 22 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Lehman, Sharon A.**, 54, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 20. Spouse: Michael Lehman. Parents: Carroll and Sandra Hook Sacra. Children: Ashley Lehman, Amy Lehman, Chad Lehman. Memorial service: May 23 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Luginbuhl, Darvin**, 91, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 26. Spouse: Evelyn Johnson Luginbuhl. Parents: William and Fannie Steiner Luginbuhl. Children: Gregg, Bill; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 3 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Miller, Blaine Edward**, 78, Springs, Pa., died May 17. Spouse: Mary Catherine Stanton Miller (deceased). Parents: Myron and Grace Moser Miller. Children: Mitchell. Funeral: May 21 at Springs Mennonite Church.

**Neuenschwander, Beth Anne**, 51, Archbold, Ohio, died April 19, of cancer. Spouse: Steve Neuenschwander. Parents: Bill and Marilyn Liechty Grieser. Children: Shay Neuenschwander Rufenacht, Shem, Shannon, Abram. Funeral: April 24 at Archbold Evangelical Church.

**Nofziger, Marjorie F. Gerig**, 89, Lebanon, Ore., died April 18, of heart-related problems. Spouse: Alfred E. Nofziger (deceased). Parents: Henry and Bertha Boshart Gerig. Children: Karen Martin, Nadine LeFrancis, Laurence, Cheryl Berkey, Mark, Jolene Rich; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 11 at Lebanon Mennonite Church.

**Sawatzky, Maurine Catherine Bauer**, 93, Goshen, Ind., died May 22. Spouse: Reynold Sawatzky. Parents: Ernest and Catherine Bauer Stieglitz. Children: Renee Sawatzky, Nila Sawatzky. Funeral: May 28 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Schlabach, Raymond Cecil**, 89, Kalona, Iowa, died May 18. Spouse: Barbara D. Schlabaugh Schlabach. Parents: Noah and Bertha Miller Schlabach. Children: Linda Tones, Lou Miller, Kathy Schlabach; two grandchildren; three step-grandchildren. Funeral: May 21 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

**Schmidt, Erna Ruth Duerksen**, 83, Topeka, Kan., died April 13, of cancer. Spouse: Orlando "Orie" Schmidt (deceased). Children: Beverly Schmidt, Yvonne Unruh, Barbara Banman, Chuck, Emily Blackburn, John; 15 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: April 16 at Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka.

**Showalter, Roy Samuel**, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., May 6. Spouse: Mary Katherine Kack Martin Showalter. Parents: Peter Samuel and Leanna Hartman Showalter and step-mother Wilda Swartz Showalter. Children: Roy Samuel Showalter, Jr., Joan Showalter Alder, Judi Martin Leake, Jenny Showalter Graber; 11 grandchildren; one great-granddaughter. Memorial service: May 9 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Stockburger, Roger E.**, 64, West Unity, Ohio, died April 18. Parents: Claire and Beulah Stamm Stockburger. Funeral: April 27 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

**Sweigart, Gladys A. Stoltzfus**, 92, New Holland, Pa., died May 11. Spouse: Melvin G. Sweigart (deceased). Parents: Jacob S. and Rebecca K. Stoltzfus. Children: Philip G., Dirk M., Rebecca K. Boyer, John M.; five grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

**Trissel, Catarina Winter**, 68, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 17. Spouse: Larry D. Trissel. Parents: John and Anna Friesen Winter. Children: Anita Trissel Lunsford, Jonathan Lantz-Trissel, Derik Trissel; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Wease, Irma Virginia Breeden**, 96, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 27. Spouse: Edward W. Wease (deceased). Parents: Matthew Breeden and Addie Dean Breeden Haney. Children: Leroy Wease, Martha Blizzard, Lynn Wease, Robert "Bobby," Mary Jane Staples, Gary; 14 grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; six step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Weaver, Cleo W.**, 91, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 8. Spouse: Edith Metzler Weaver (deceased). Children: William E. "Bill," Larry W., Richard L., Kenneth C., Susan M. Weaver Funk; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 19 at VMRC Detwiler Auditorium, Harrisonburg.

**Wiebe, Abram G.**, 94, Altona, Manitoba, died March 5. Spouse: Tina Wiebe. Parents: John H. and Maria Ginter Wiebe. Children: Myrna, Wes, Elbert; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

# Blush

A MENNONITE GIRL MEETS THE GLITTERING WORLD

*Coming September 2013*

**by Shirley Hershey Showalter**

"I promise: You will be transported."
—Bill Moyers, bestselling author and journalist
Blush
A MENNONITE GIRL MEETS THE GLITTERING WORLD
Shirley Hershey Showalter

## From the book:

"Look at this big fella!" my father said. We all turned to see him take off his Eby's Feeds cap, exposing his white forehead in contrast to the dark red of his cheeks. Dangling from his other hand was the plumpest neon-green tobacco worm I had ever seen. It was about three inches long and half an inch wide. As it writhed in Daddy's hand, I felt the little hairs on the back of my neck stand up. We all made faces.

I could tell that Daddy was expecting more reaction, so I briefly considered letting out my best scream but instead decided to try another tack. I pretended to take a scientific interest in the little black tentacles under the accordionlike sections of the bright green body. Daddy looked at me observing the worm, so cool and calm. Then he did something rare. He spoke spontaneously, recklessly.

"I'll give you five dollars if you bite this worm in two," he said.

* * *

*Like standing in a bright meadow and watching the world move around you as you move through it. I promise: You will be transported.*
—Bill Moyers, bestselling author and journalist

**www.MennoMedia.org/Blush**
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**Herald Press**

## RESOURCES

**Educating All God's Children: What Christians Can—and Should—Do to Improve Public Education for Low-Income Kids** by Nicole Baker Fulgham (Brazos Press, 2013, $17.99) explores what Christians—and everyone—can and should do to help improve our public schools. It paints a picture of what is possible for America's public school children and offers a road map for getting there.

**Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship** by Bruce Ellis Benson (BakerAcademic, 2013, $17.99) explores how the arts inform and cultivate service to God, helping the church not only think differently about the arts but also act differently. Benson contends we are all artists, that our very lives should be seen as art and that we should live liturgically in service to God and neighbor.

**The Petals of a Kansas Sunflower: A Mennonite Diaspora** by Melvin D. Epp (Resource Publications, 2012, $54) weaves a montage of stories, photos and personal reminiscences around the collected poems of Epp's mother, who raised eight children as a farm wife on the Kansas prairies.

**Two Feet at the Altar: Four Love Stories and Five People** by Mildred Martens-Unruh and Roy Unruh (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011, $11.99) tells the story of two couples who were friends. After two of the spouses were killed in accidents, Mildred and Roy later married. The book is available at createspace.com/3489405 or at amazon.com.

**Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting and Coming Together** by Jerusalem Jackson Greer (Paraclete Press, 2013, $21) celebrates the rhythm of family life as well as the liturgical year from Advent to Easter and beyond, marking God's love in our lives in practical, beautiful, fun ways. It includes color illustrations, recipes, crafts and entertaining ideas.

**Learning to Dream Again: Rediscovering the Heart of God** by Samuel Wells (Eerdmans, 2013, $18) is designed both for Christians who have been to church for years but long to ponder the ambiguities and hard questions of faith and life and for new Christians who are just beginning to investigate how the gospel connects to their most searching questions.

**Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation** by Reta Halteman Finger and George D. McClain (Herald Press, 2013, $17.99) draws readers back to Chloe's house church, which has just received a letter from the Apostle Paul. The book draws on research to show how the gospel penetrated the Roman Empire.

Attention pastors

Special mailing of *The Mennonite's* **Phoenix 2013** issue available

Everyone in your congregation can read about the happenings at **Phoenix 2013** even if they don't receive *The Mennonite.*

Please contact Rebecca Helmuth at **800-790-2498** or **Subscriptions@themennonite.org** to place your order. We will send your order in bulk at $2 per copy ($3 Cnd). Your order and payment **must be received by July 15**. No invoice will be issued at this low price. Send payment to *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517.

TheMennonite

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite,* call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

**Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society** is seeking a ***full-time director of development***. Primary responsibilities include building a development program, cultivating relationships with individuals, congregations and businesses and managing capital campaigns. The person should have experience and training with development activities in nonprofit organizations. Applicants must embrace Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and be active in an Anabaptist congregation. Application form and job description are available in pdf format at www.lmhs.org/home/about/employment. Submit application and resumé by email to Dorothy Siegrist by July 12 at jobs@lmhs.org or by mail to LMHS, Attn: Office Manager, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602.

***Staff accountant*: Mennonite Disaster Service** (MDS) is seeking a part-time staff accountant (25–30 hours) based at the Lititz, Pa., office. Primary responsibilities include: month-end closing and preparation of monthly financial statements, reconciliations, general ledger, fixed assets and assistance with preparation and analysis of budgets. Working in an Excel and Quickbooks environment. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position. See the full job description at http://mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment. Resumés may be sent to jobs@mds.mennonite.net or MDS, 583 Airport Rd., Lititz, PA 17543, Attn: Human Resources. Review of applications begins immediately. Recruitment continues until the position is filled.

**Spruce Lake's Internship Program** placements open in ***retreat center programming, outdoor education/ministry, adventure programming, food service, maintenance/ groundskeeping, marketing/social networking and operations***. Program includes required courses, mentoring relationship. Housing, food, stipend, all materials provided. Contact Sarah Kauffman (cell) 570-369-3982 or intern2013@sprucelake.org. See www.sprucelake.org.

**SpringHaven Counseling Center** (www.springhaven.us) seeks an ***executive director***, beginning Jan. 1, 2014. Located in rural north central Ohio, we are a faith-based outpatient mental health facility that serves our community, including Amish. We are a growing organization with a $1 million budget, 18 employees and several developing specialty fields. Qualified candidates will have an ongoing commitment to personal spiritual journey, active clinical mental health license and administrative experience. Email resumés to Krista at wenleh@hotmail.com.

**Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary** is seeking a ***professor of peace studies and Christian social ethics***. Qualifications include a Ph.D. with interdisciplinary competence in peace studies and Christian theology or social ethics and international and cross-cultural experience. Responsibilities include teaching in areas such as environment, power and anti-oppression analysis, war and violence and conflict mediation and advocating for the integration of peace and justice with the mission of the church. By Sept. 15, send letter of application, CV and list of references to Dr. Rebecca Slough, Academic Dean, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517 or electronically to rslough@ambs.edu. Full job description at www.ambs.edu/about/Job-openings.cfm.

The **Fransen Family Foundation** ***is accepting applications from 501(c)3 organizations for micro-grants***. See details at fransenfamilyfoundation.org. Submission deadline is July 31, 2013.

***Home and business***. Four-bedroom home with cookstove on 22 acres bottomland, two wells, also commercial building (4,000 square feet) with loading dock and walk-in freezer, both in Cameron, Mo. Please call for details, 816-284-2714. Can be purchased separately or as a package.

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# Washing away our self-sufficiency

**Jon Heinly**
is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School.

As we sat in their living room, the feeling of warm hospitality overwhelmed us, but this feeling first arose before we arrived on their doorstep. They were there to welcome us at the door. We stepped inside, and they took our coats. They invited us to sit, and we sank comfortably onto the sofa. Finally, they offered us hot tea.

Their hospitality began with an email sent to us when they became aware of a difficult experience that we were going through. We needed it so much, and it came so unexpectedly, that the invitation alone brought tears of gratitude to our eyes. The timing of this simple act of welcome touched us deeply.

The couple that invited us into their home is the age of our parents. We knew them only casually, but well enough to have great respect for them as Christian leaders. That night, along with tea and a seat on their sofa, this couple offered us three hours of their time—three hours full of wisdom, peace, counsel, encouragement and their own stories of experiencing life's difficulties. It was a sacred space, and it was an encounter of grace and hospitality.

**Later I thought of that evening** in relation to a story of Jesus. As he enters the most trying hours of his life, he extends hospitality to his disciples. The Gospel of John says that Jesus "got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me' " (13:4-8).

It is almost as if Jesus is responding to Peter's pride by saying, "You know what Peter? You need this from me. This act goes deeper than the grime left around your sandals." To have our feet washed, literally or figuratively, is a humbling thing. We find ourselves vulnerable and exposed, but it is in that very vulnerability that we can experience the healing ministry of hospitality. When I participate in footwashing, I am much more comfortable washing another person's feet than having my own feet washed. Likewise, it is easier to serve another person than to receive another's service. I don't really mind the dirt on another person's feet or the brokenness in his or her life, but God forbid anyone need to touch my dirty feet or see into the broken areas of my life. That's far too embarrassing. It's no wonder Peter responded the way he did. Not only was his master about to touch his filthy feet, but he also knew that Jesus could see into the very depths of his being, a place more embarrassing than the dirtiest pair of feet.

Even now, Jesus continues to wash the feet of his disciples, but he does it mostly through other people. In a figurative but profound way, Jesus washed our feet as we sat in that living room. Like Peter, the vulnerability of our experience was devastating to our pride and healing to our souls.

I'm challenged to receive the hospitality of those around me.

**Hospitality is an intrinsic element** of Christian faith, which is demonstrated throughout Scripture. For example, years before Jesus washed the disciples' feet, as a bookend to this last act of earthly ministry, his first public miracle aided in lengthening a wedding celebration in Cana. As the early church began embodying the teachings of Jesus, they gathered regularly in homes and around the table. Acts of hospitality are listed as key parts of Christian life from the very inception of the church.

As I reflect back on my experience at that couple's home and examples of the ministry of hospitality in Scripture, especially the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, I am challenged to actively extend hospitality to people around me. Creating a welcome space may seem like a simple thing, whether on a living room sofa or an open seat on a park bench, but it sets up the opportunity for the powerful ministry of hospitality to bring peace and healing. Perhaps more importantly, I'm challenged to receive the hospitality of those around me. In that vulnerability, I may be surprised to realize that Jesus is kneeling there, washing away the grime of my self-sufficiency and bringing healing to my brokenness. TM

# Who needs reporters?

This title of an op-ed piece by Frank Bruni in the June 1 *New York Times* caught my eye, since I sometimes serve in the role of reporter. But it also raises an important issue we all should address: the role of reporting the news in order to hold leaders of various kinds accountable to their constituents.

Bruni notes that in recent months, Michele Bachmann, Anthony Weiner and Hillary Clinton used carefully made online videos to make important announcements.

You may ask, What's the big deal? It's one more example of politicians trying to control their image so they look good. And it follows the example of corporate America, which has been doing this for a long time.

"But corporations answer only to shareholders and customers," Bruni writes. "Politicians answer to all of us, and have a scarier kind of power, easily abused. So we must see them in environments that aren't necessarily tailored to their advantage."

Someone needs to point out where the Emperor has no clothes. Someone needs to question the pretense or the image being manufactured. These leaders are accountable to us citizens? The Fourth Estate (the press) is one major way they are held accountable.

Such need for accountability applies to many other contexts, including Mennonite congregations, conferences and Mennonite Church USA. We are to hold each other accountable, by whatever method works best. That aligns with the Anabaptist "rule of Christ" (Matthew 18:15-20).

Unfortunately, reporters are becoming a rarer breed and losing influence. An editorial called "Empty Calories" in the May/June issue of *Columbia Journalism Review*, addresses the growing popularity of social media for getting news.

The Pew Research Center reports that 72 percent of all U.S. adults say the most common way they hear about news from family and friends is through "word of mouth." And 23 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds say they primarily get news from family and friends via social media.

Many people get their news from social media, from bloggers and those who scrape together items from various sources. But what kind of news are they getting? How do they know what's true? asks the editorial. "How can they get beyond the superficial updates about Justin Bieber's monkey or Kim Kardashian's pregnancy?"

As "more and more journalism shops that underwrite enterprise reporting are starting to lock their wares behind paywalls," says the editorial, "someday, in the not-too-distant future, it seems, there will be very little credible news for the bloggers and scrapers to aggregate."

A key word there is "credible." Reporters are trained to ask probing questions and get quotes from various perspectives in order to try to get as accurate as possible description of an event.

Social media may provide this at times, but how do we know? Or do we just go to those sources who agree with our point of view? This is what Eli Pariser has called a "filter bubble."

Too much of what's out there, says the editorial, consists of "empty calories." But "general-interest media, at least, take [readers] beyond the bubble (they might come for Kim but then discover Syria)."

As we seek to find what's credible and hold our leaders accountable, let's pay close attention to the news we consume and where it comes from.

We all need reporters.

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

## FILM REVIEWS

**The Great Gatsby** (PG-13) is the most recent treatment of F. Scott Fitzgerald's beautiful novel. While Leonardo DiCaprio gives a fine, nuanced performance of the rich, mysterious title character, the film lacks nuance and instead goes over the top at every turn, even insulting viewers' intelligence by overexplaining plot points. *—Gordon Houser*

**Before Midnight** (R) is the third in a trilogy of films about a couple who meet on a train bound for Vienna in *Before Sunrise* (1995) and reunite in Paris in *Before Sunset* (2004). Here they are in Greece with their twin daughters. All three films consist mostly of dialogue yet engage us with their characters and the issues they address. Here they touch on the nature of marriage, the differences between men's and women's perspectives, parenting and work. Many couples will recognize their own struggles in this brilliant film.*—gh*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable** by Steven D. Boyer and Christopher A. Hall (BakerAcademic, 2012, $19.99) steer a course between an overly rational denial of mystery and an irrational acceptance by exploring its meaning in Scripture and church history. "While the mystery of God is by definition beyond rational comprehension," the authors write, "the *appeal* to mystery need not be." While technical in places, the book is written for lay, particularly evangelical, readers.*—gh*

**The Blessed Virgin Mary** by Tim Perry and Daniel Kendall (Eerdmans, 2013, $18) examines the church's diverse thinking about Mary, the mother of Jesus. It discusses Mary's relationship to her Son, her relationship to the corporate faithful and her relationship to individual believers. The authors, an evangelical Anglican and a Roman Catholic, agree that "Mary is a model disciple for all believers."*—gh*

*(Continued from page 4)*

ized content leading to passivity, lack of empathy, desensitization to violence present not only on the screen but in action toys, clothing and food packaging.

Screen technologies are drastically changing the lives of children. Behavioral research shows that the more time young children spend with screens, the more they watch later on and the more difficulty they have turning off screens as they become older. New neuroimaging techniques provide biological evidence of the addictive properties of some screen media.

But we can choose screen activities carefully with developmentally appropriate time limits for children beyond toddlerhood accompanied with consistent monitoring. We digital immigrants must not forget that developing children thrive when they are talked to, read to and played with.—*Kathryn Aschliman, coordinator of the Mennonite Early Childhood Network*

### What to do with confessions?

When I was reading Everett Thomas' editorial "Should We Censor History?" (June), a tangential memory cropped up for me. I was taken back 30 years to a discussion I had with bishop John E. Lapp of the Franconia Conference. I was in my mid-20s and working as the archivist for the Franconia Conference and Eastern District. John was retired from his many years as pastor, conference and denominational leader. John had given the archives his extensive papers and now had arrived holding one more box of papers. He told me that inside the box were the signed letters of confession that people had given him over his years of ministry. He had a question for me: Should these letters of confession be placed in the archives or destroyed?

That is a hard question for a historian. I felt humbled and honored and unworthy to give bishop John E. Lapp such important advice. But John just sat there waiting for me to answer. The information would be a rich resource for future historians as they worked to understand the faith and culture of our Mennonite church. But confessions by fellow church members seemed like a sacred thing that should not be seen by others. I told John that my view was that he should destroy the letters. John thanked me and took the box of letters out the door.—*Joe Miller, Lancaster, Pa.*

### Good deeds and verbal witness

"Let Us Pray for Revival" by Myron Augsburger (June) felt like a fresh breeze from God's Spirit. It reminded me of the importance of a repentant spirit and "enjoying the fullness of Christ." It is refreshing to be called to "a new obedience to the Word of God" and a renewed focus on biblical preaching.

In the same issue, Loren Horst, in "Deed and Word," reminds me to do good deeds and match that with a verbal witness for Christ. Putting these two challenges of enjoying Christ and speaking for him together should make me a dynamic witness for the Lord Jesus. A witness that is not "ashamed of [Jesus] and [Jesus'] words in this adulterous and sinful generation." I'm making a note to remind me to also pray for revival and speak a word of witness for my Lord.—*Simon Schrock, Catlett, Va.*

### Article not appropriate

This morning I physically tore up my copy of *The Mennonite* and threw it away—not in anger at some theological vantage point that made me afraid and that I confused with anger but at the words, "Each bonnet is stored alone in its own container" (June).

These fateful words appeared in an article about Claire DeBerg and her modeling career. I'm sure that DeBerg is a lovely person and as the new editor of *Timbrel* should be covered in some capacity in *The Mennonite*. But here's a suggestion: Why not interview DeBerg about her hopes and dreams for the magazine? What perspective does she hope to bring to light as a woman in the Mennonite church and its unique position in the broader Christian landscape? What are her dreams for my daughter, who is growing up in a rapidly changing world where she will continue to need to fight back against society's attempt to see her as one dimensional and only approve of her if she is easy on the eyes?

I feel *The Mennonite* owes DeBerg (and *Timbrel*) such an interview. The world of selling products for Corporate America and the high drama of Amish Romance are of course fascinating but belong in their own container—one not labeled *The Mennonite*.—*Curt Weaver, Milwaukie, Ore.*

### Many have blessed the church

Mennonite Church USA moderator Dick Thomas asked a question in "Why We Gather" (April): Will we gather believing the best about each other? He states that we want to make Spirit-led decisions of faithfulness that help all of us in the diversity of our geographical settings and multiplicity of educational, theological experiences. This covers a huge core of values.

How do we—in love—make the necessary decisions to carry on the accomplishments of our church? Are we acquainted enough with each other to have a united bond?

The cover of the May issue was a pleasing surprise to me. Rachel Kreider's centenarian life has been a blessing to so many individuals beyond the interest of genealogy. There is no subject that she is lacking to be able to enjoy a visit with her.

The June issue had Lyle Yost on the cover. Farmers who are dedicated to feeding the world would certainly have missed the blessings of the production of Hesston Machinery.

In his article, Thomas mentioned some from Goshen, Ind., including Mary E. Bender, Sanford Yoder and Guy Hershberger. They blessed the Mennonite Church at large in witnessing to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.—*Mary Helen Wade, Sterling, Ill.*

# God sightings in new churches

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*— Acts 13:2-3

Just as the Holy Spirit spoke to a group of worshippers in Antioch many years ago, the Holy Spirit speaks today—calling and commissioning people to new ministries. This is happening in an exciting way through the planting of new "kingdom communities" in Mennonite Church USA. These communities bear witness to God's work in the world, serving as a foretaste of God's kingdom of righteousness/justice, peace and joy. Over the past five years, we have seen the birth of 85 new fellowships in 17 area conferences across the United States.

Along with about 60 other church planting leaders from Mennonite Church USA, I attended an ecumenical gathering called Exponential 2013 in late April of this year. The meeting brought together more than 5,000 people (with another 20,000 people online) committed to planting new churches. While not every presentation resonated with Anabaptist theology and practice, my heart for the church was strengthened by the strong emphasis on being and making disciples for Jesus Christ. This focus must undergird any sustainable movement for church planting. Planting new churches (and launching new groups in established churches) can be an effective way of reaching new people for the kingdom of God.

**The Exponential conference** was a God sighting for me, reminding me of what God has been saying to and through the Mennonite church for years. Too often, we have neglected this call, demonstrated in five "disciple shifts" from the pervading church culture.

1. A disciple shift enables us to move away from simply reaching new people toward a relational disciple making that invites new people to be apprentices, learning the ways of Jesus Christ.
2. A disciple shift occurs when church leaders move away from a focus on leading toward a focus on being Spirit-led, being alert to God sightings and showing the way forward.
3. A disciple shift takes place when church leaders move from simply being teachers to being examples of what Jesus did and taught.
4. A disciple shift helps churches move from assimilating new members into our church programs toward creating missional communities.
5. A disciple shift helps churches change the emphasis from drawing new groups of people toward sending equipped followers of Jesus to new groups of people.

**These five disciple shifts** work best when they are supported at all levels of church fellowship—small discipleship groups, congregations, districts or area conferences, and in national or world conferences.

As executive director of Mennonite Church USA, I am committed to do all within my power to keep us focused on the main thing—being and making disciples of Jesus Christ. Everything else that a church needs to do will grow out of this commitment.

As denominational staff, we are committed to the planting of peace churches that disciple new people all across this country. Led by the Spirit, we will work closely with area conferences and their congregations to assist them in calling, equipping, sending and networking church planters.

In recent years, Mauricio Chenlo and Kuaying Teng (shared staff with Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and Mennonite Mission Network) have worked alongside many area conferences, envisioning new church plants as well as helping to secure funding and training opportunities for leaders. Mauricio worked with area conferences to compile a list of the more than 85 church plants initiated in the past five years—now listed on the Mennonite Church USA website.

My heart leaps with joy when I look over this list of new churches. It is a sign that God is at work in Mennonite Church USA. Let us enthusiastically join God in that work. TM

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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# Digital dieting

Anna Groff

It is possible to be so gluttonous with our digital diet as to need a “digital detox.” This is what journalist Daniel Sieberg told Associated Church Press members in Indianapolis in April. His point: use of social media needs balance, restraint and intentionality.

Sieberg began by confessing about his former technology addiction as a CBS news correspondent. It came to a head in 2009, when he realized that he was completely out of touch with the people he cared about. Sieberg found that he spent more than 30 solid days (725 hours) on social media in 2007. He felt anxious without cell phone reception or Internet connections.

Sieberg still uses social media. But he resists the urge to let it define or shape him, as he writes in his book *The Digital Diet: The 4-step Plan to Break Your Tech Addiction.* Despite his lifestyle changes, his past still haunts him. He describes “social network echoes,” in which something “happens in my life and I catch myself formulating how I’d write a status update or a tweet … it seems stupid and trivial, yet I used to obsess about it.”

> The first person to reach for their phone ‘loses’ and buys everyone coffee.

It is these feelings and urges that prevent us from embracing the present and feeling grateful for what we have. Instead, it can breed insecurity an uneasiness and restlessness.

Some of us may relate to Sieberg’s feelings while others might wonder incredulously: How could you ever spend an entire hour on Facebook? Regardless, Sieberg’s book offers suggestions relevant to the tech-addicted, the tech-dependent and those with friends in need of a digital diet.

One suggestion includes finding your “virtual weight index” by adding up and evaluating all the devices, websites and services you regularly use and even putting those devices in a box for a short period of time during the first phase of the detox.

After reading the book, I made two small changes. First, I went back to using an alarm clock instead of my iPhone. At night I charge my phone in my office away from where I sleep. Second, I continue to use my phone to listen to music while running, but I now turn it on to airplane mode to avoid calls or texts during jogs so it’s just me and my dog.

Sieberg, who now works for Google, was quick to state that technology is not all bad. “The digital diet is just like food,” he said in April. “Love your technology—just not unconditionally.”

In fact, he described several applications that he claim use technology to our advantage. One is Slife, a program that tracks and reports your online activity and allows you to set an “egg timer” while on certain websites.

Positive computing is another growing movement. An example of positive computing is a program that gathers all your positive and encouraging emails so you can read them before a stressful meeting or job interview.

Phoenix 2013 offers a setting for us to practice healthy technology use. For example, try an exercise when eating out with friends where everyone places their phone in the middle of table. The first one to reach for their phone “loses” and buys everyone coffee.

On the positive side, technology and social media also allow those not attending the Phoenix convention to experience elements of the gathering. *The Mennonite* staff, along with other agencies, will be posting regularly on social media sites. Moderator-elect Elizabeth Soto Albrecht (see p. 12) will blog about her sojourn to Phoenix.

As we prepare to gather, let us be conscious of our tech diet and grateful for what it offers.—*ag*

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## Stories and photos from Phoenix 2013

PHOENIX 2013
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of God's Kingdom
HEALED IN HOPE

August 2013

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- Delegates focus on immigration
- Photos from Phoenix 2013
- Do we love the world that God loves?
- Graphic images in media
- Was Phoenix worth it?

"I promise: You will be transported." –Bill Moyers, bestselling author and journalist
Blush
A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World
Shirley Hershey Showalter

## Blush

### A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World

*By Shirley Hershey Showalter*

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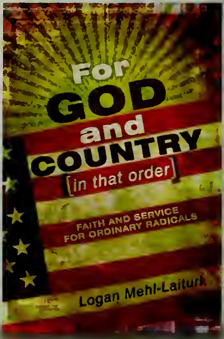
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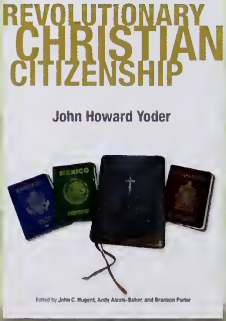
REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP
John Howard Yoder
Edited by John C. Nugent, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Branson Parler

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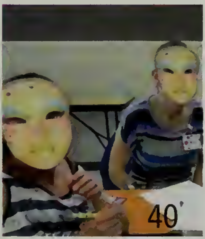

ON THE COVER: Photo by Jonathan Charles at the U.S.-Mexico border wall

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TheMennonite
August 2013 | Volume 16, Number 8

*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite*, or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

## Must fight for unity

Regarding Elizabeth Soto Albrecht's challenge in "A New Journey" (July): "No more shunning, no more violence. It's a call for discernment in difficult issues. We must lead it. We must learn how to fight for unity." This is for the whole denomination, not just our congregation. We support this challenge and work at it every day. We are praying for Elizabeth in her leadership role and are trusting God to use her in a mighty way to bring Mennonite Church USA to closer participation with God's kingdom agenda.—*Sharon Williams, Norristown, Pa.*

## God the Father is missing

I read with interest Ken Gingerich's article "Walking With the Trinity" (July). He says the doctrine of the Trinity did not make sense to second-century Jews or eighth-century Muslims. He might also have mentioned that it did not make sense to some 16th-century Anabaptists, such as the followers of Adam Pastor and the Polish Brethren.

Even though our current confession of faith affirms trinitarianism, it is interesting that the confession has an article for God followed by an article for Jesus and one for the Holy Spirit. If all three persons of the Trinity are equally God, you would think there would be a separate article for the Father as well. The confession reflects the fact that most Christians are referring to the Father when they speak of God.

There are a few denominations that affirm "biblical unitarianism," such as the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. Biblical unitarians usually believe that the Father is the one true God, Jesus is his son and the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit is not a person but a spiritual force that emanates from God. This is what I believe, since I find it to be more scriptural than trinitarianism.

It amazes me that many Christians, including some who seem to think the Old Testament is a book of mythology, insist that the only position on the Godhead open to Christians is the belief that God is literally three distinct persons and that Jesus is literally God incarnate. If we ever rewrite the current confession of faith, I'd like to see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit explained in a way that makes sense to both trinitarians and nontrinitarians.—*Jerry C. Stanaway, Villa Park, Ill.*

## The 'other' holds the key

In Richard Rohr's daily meditation, he writes about the sin of exclusion: "Those at the edge of any system and those excluded from any system ironically and invariably hold the secret for the conversion and wholeness of that very group." He suggests that when we receive "those who don't play our game our way, we discover not only the hidden, feared and hated parts of our souls but the fullness of Jesus himself." Jesus repeatedly showed us how to minister to the marginalized people he encountered. What does this mean for Mennonite Church USA? I am suggesting that by replacing fear and rejection with God's love and acceptance, we will renew our faith. God's healing and hope will flow through us to our sisters and brothers who are immigrants, all sexual orientations and any we view as "other."—*Joyce Hostetler, Goshen, Ind.*

## Thanks for article

Thanks for Ronald Holland's timely article, "Blessed are the Peacemakers" (July) with all of the very relevant statistics.—*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

### John Howard Yoder

**Editor's note:** *In his June Mediaculture column, associate editor Gordon Houser reviewed a recent book of John Howard Yoder's writings and a book about his theology. Barbra Graber, in the July Letters section, criticized Houser for the reviews, and we published Houser's response immediately after Graber's letter. The following three letters are arranged in the order they were received.*

Regarding John Howard Yoder: I have found helpful an account by Stanley Hauerwas in his memoir *Hannah's Child*. On pages 242-247 he reviews the discipline process briefly and reports that after four years of committee work, "On the last Sunday in December 1997, John and Annie were warmly reunited in worship at Prairie Street Mennonite Church. John died on December 30, 1997."

It may be that more needs to be said, but I find a kind of closure in this account.—*Daniel Hertzler, Scottdale, Pa.*

Regarding Gordon Houser's response to Barbra Graber: How sad that Houser couldn't have just stopped after his first sentence. His "but" [nevertheless], suggests—whether he finds it true or not—that academia carries more weight than Christlike behavior. Sometimes an acknowledgement is all that is needed, and less is more.—*Carol Wenger, New Holland, Pa.*

Gordon Houser's defensive response to Barbra Graber's letter is symptomatic of Mennonite institutional disregard for John Howard Yoder's victims. Houser deflects attention from John Howard Yoder's abusive behavior and prefers to emphasize his "insights as a scholar." Houser does not address Graber's call for justice for Yoder's victims.

Barbra Graber criticizes Mennonite institutions, one of which is *The Mennonite*, for neglecting Yoder's victims. She points out that "women who endured his assaults … have yet to receive any kind of official apology or recompense from the church … while the church conducted its well-organized coverup." She has the courage to demand an appropriate response to "Yoder's chronic sexually abusive and violent behavior toward women all over the world for many years"—a part of our history that many would prefer simply to forget.

A pacifist theology is a "sham" unless we are willing to (1) hear the cries of those who feel abused and call for justice, (2) honestly consider the issue and (3) address the issue.

In the case of John Howard Yoder, this response should, at the very least, continue for the duration of the victims' lives and in perpetuity at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.—*Ruth Anne Abraham, Austin, Texas*

### More about Claire DeBerg

In response to Curt Weaver's letter (July) asking to hear about *Timbrel* editor Claire DeBerg's vision for the magazine and dreams for making a difference for young women growing up in a rapidly changing world, we bring more of her story:

DeBerg's desire to live out her Anabaptist faith through serving women of the Mennonite church is uppermost in her career goals. She says, "All facets of Mennonite Women USA's mission inspire me, especially in this time of technological advancements." DeBerg's background includes a master's degree in writing, website project manager work and teaching at the University of Northern Iowa.

In a blog post for the Women in Leadership Project, DeBerg shared her goal for women to be liberated from systems that discourage authenticity:

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention held July 1-5 and called Phoenix 2013 is the primary subject of this issue. Our coverage includes 63 photos, 16 articles and an editorial. Because the 4,681 participants represent less than a quarter of our magazine's readership, this extensive coverage is our effort to share the experience with as many people as possible.

Unlike other conventions, less time was given at Phoenix 2013 for delegate sessions, and more time was scheduled for learning activities and tours—mostly with a focus on U.S. immigration issues. This also meant delegates could take part in activities that are not usually available to them because they need to be in delegate sessions.

In "Was Phoenix Worth It?" the editorial describes the "good-hearted lightness that prevailed during the week" (page 56).

We encourage pastors to purchase extra copies of this issue for those who do not regularly subscribe. See the advertisement on page 54.

There is other important news, however. Lynda Hollinger-Janzen tells the story of Jean-Richard Muteba Wa Mbuyi, who left occult rituals and amulets when he became a Christian and is now part of the pastoral team at the Sangilayi Evangelical Mennonite Church in the Congo (page 42).

On page 43 is a delightful story of Ethiopians in Lancaster, Pa., who honored 65 mission workers for their efforts to bring the gospel to Ethiopia beginning in the 1950s.

In this month's News Analysis (page 44), researcher Julie Putman Hart describes her findings when she asked former military veterans why they became pacifist. She identifies four catalysts for the change: combat, betrayal, religious conviction and education.—*Editor*

## Executive Board meets before convention

PHOENIX—During a four-hour Executive Board meeting on July 1, the binational MennoMedia board asked for a bylaw change that would allow it to expand from eight to 11 members.

"We heard from MennoMedia that they want to strengthen their board by adding a few more members," said Dick Thomas, Mennonite Church USA moderator, during the meeting.

The board approved the change unanimously, as did the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly on July 5, when it made other revisions to the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws. Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council, at the behest of its General Board, had approved the board expansion earlier.

In other action, the Executive Board formed its executive committee for the 2013-2015 biennium: David Sutter, David Boshart and Nancy Heisey will join new moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht and moderator-elect Patricia Shelly.—*Everett J. Thomas*

## MW USA hosts annual dinner at Phoenix 2013

PHOENIX—Mennonite Women USA hosted its traditional Women's Dinner at Phoenix 2013 on July 3. Co-directors Rhoda Keener and Ruth Lapp Guengerich greeted nearly 200 women.

Carolyn Heggen, co-presenter of MW USA's Sister Care seminars, spoke about the ways God is moving mightily in this ministry bringing Sister Care to an international level.

Jennifer Davis Sensenig, pastor at Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., spoke on "Rahab: Faith on the Border." She looked at the implications of Rahab's choices and how they instruct and inspire followers of Jesus to make both extraordinary decisions and critical requests in the name of God. She challenged everyone to pay attention to the ways God is speaking into moments where our faith is on the border.—*MW USA*

Everett J. Thomas

**Horsing around at Phoenix 2013**

Spencer Yoder, Alec Mast and Cole Reynolds from Martin's Creek Mennonite Church in Millersburg, Ohio, remain silent in the exhibit hall at the Phoenix 2013 convention.—*Everett J. Thomas*

## Byler leads church class discussion about mental health in the Bible

NEWTON, Kan.—Jason Byler, a licensed clinical social worker with Prairie View in Newton, has led adult Sunday school classes at Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church in discussing common mental health problems. He also addresses what the teachings of Jesus say about mental health.

One in five Americans experienced some form of mental illness in 2010.

"The challenge for churches is to open up the discussion without judging, without assuming mental illness to be the result of a troubled relationship with our God," says Byler.

"The Bible has endless stories about God's people who lived with mental illness," Byler said.

Byler covers topics like epilepsy, referred to in Mark 17, where Jesus heals a boy who has likely experienced a grand mal seizure. He talks about Bible characters like Cain, Jacob, Saul or David, whose words and actions show symptoms of depression. And Byler links mental health experiences from the Bible with the church today.

Prairie View is a faith-based mental health organization that was founded by Mennonites in 1954.—*Prairie View*

### Registrations from Phoenix 2013

Adults: 1,529
Junior youth and sponsors: 85
Youth and youth sponsors: 2,751
Children: 110
  Infant/Toddlers: 16
  Preschool: 23
  K-5: 71
Volunteers: 206

## Young Anabaptists prepare for Global Youth Summit in 2015

AKRON, Pa.—Preparations for the 2015 Global Youth Summit and transitions within the committee marked the annual meeting of the Young Anabaptists (YABs) Committee held here May 23-28.

The committee welcomed Lani

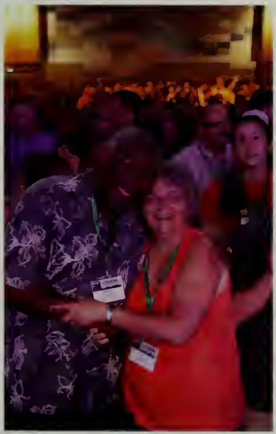
Prunés of the United States as the new North American representative, replacing Kristina Toews of Canada, who is now serving as the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) web communications worker in Bogotá, Colombia. Toews, the outgoing chair, will continue to be available as a consultant to the YABs Committee.

Rodrigo Pedroza García of Mexico, YABs Latin American representative, was affirmed as the new YABs Committee chair by the Executive Committee, though he was unable to get his visa in time to attend the meeting. They communicated with Pedroza frequently via Skype.

The committee decided that the third Global Youth Summit will be held July 17-19, 2015, right before the MWC Assembly, scheduled for July 21-26. The theme will be "Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts."

Other members of the committee are Tigist Tesfaye Gelagle of Ethiopia, Sumana Basumata of India, mentor Ayub Omondi of Kenya and Marc Pasqués of Spain.—*MWC*

Lowell Brown



## Honoring pastors

Basil Marin (left) and Bj Leichty are two of hundreds of pastors and conference ministers honored by youth and adult conventions in a shared worship on July 3 at Phoenix 2013.
—*Gordon Houser*

## Corinthian Plan is viable while administrators navigate reform

ELKHART, Ind.—The Corinthian Plan will continue through 2014 and as long as it serves the church effectively while administrators assess the impact of health-care reform, said Keith Harder, the plan's director, at the Phoenix 2013 convention.

Mennonite Church USA, along with third-party administrator and church agency Everence, are investigating the effect of reform on the overall plan, participating congregations and pastors. They expect more details about practical implications by this fall.

Administrators are also waiting for federal guidance regarding tax credit eligibility for church health plans and their members.—*The Corinthian Plan*

## Everence Federal Credit Union awards grants

LANCASTER, Pa.—Everence Federal Credit Union has donated $14,000 from its Rebate for Missions™ program to the global agencies of Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Mission Network.

Mennonite Disaster Service involves more than 3,000 Mennonite, Amish and Brethren in Christ churches and districts whose members volunteer to clean up, repair and rebuild homes after hurricanes, tornadoes and other disasters in the United States and Canada.

Mennonite Mission Network joins partners around the world to train leaders, support local ministry and spread the gospel of Jesus. The mission agency of Mennonite Church USA supports workers and ministries in more than 50 countries.

The credit union tithes to church and mission work 10 percent of the income generated from merchants through the use of Visa cards.

Since the Rebate for Missions™ program began in 1995, Everence Federal Credit Union has provided more than $300,000 in grants.—*Everence*

## CPT launches new logo

CHICAGO—Flowing from a three-and-a-half year mission and presentation revisioning process that included representation from all parts of Christian Peacemaker Teams, graphic artist Nekeisha Alexis-Baker has created a new logo for CPT.

christian peacemaker teams

The CPT visual identity, as Alexis-Baker articulates it, "focuses on the organization's new mission statement, "Building partnerships to transform violence and oppression." Each element of the logo, works together to suggest movement from division and strife toward renewal and restoration."—*CPT*

## MCC projects in Syria help during Ramadan

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Ramadan began July 9, and Muslims around the world are fasting during daylight hours to mark their holy month. Two Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) projects help make this time a little easier for families in need of relief, displaced by the conflict in Syria.

In Syria, an MCC emergency food program in the Qalamoun area has been extended for another six months. Five thousand families will receive monthly baskets of food, purchased locally with MCC funds. The baskets contain staples such as rice, oil, sugar, canned meat and tea.

More than 13,000 families seek food assistance in Qalamoun, and the numbers continue to rise as people are displaced by violence in other regions.
—*MCC*

# The earth is the Lord's

**Isaac Villegas** is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

For the past four years, every Thursday morning of Holy Week, a few of us from our Mennonite community have gathered with Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers, among other Christians, for a foot-washing worship service. We set up two chairs at the gate of the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center—the gate through which federal officers escort members of our community who are arrested for not having the paperwork that would authorize their presence in the United States, members of our churches and neighborhoods who are undocumented residents.

In front of the detention center, we worship; we pray and sing and read from the Bible.

"Do not put your trust in princes, in whom there is no help," we hear as someone reads from Psalm 146. "The Lord sets the prisoners free. … The Lord watches over the foreigners."

Another person takes her Bible and reads from Isaiah 61; we focus our hope on the promises of the Word of God as we "proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners," the promises of "the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God."

**Before we wash feet,** I explain why we use one chair and leave another vacant.

Year after year, presidents and police impose a strategy of deportation that tears apart families by banishing mothers and fathers from their households.

"This chair here will remain empty as a sign of all the people that law enforcement agents tear away from our communities and churches and families," I say, "a sign of absence, of missing bodies."

With the empty chair, we remember the wives and husbands, the mothers and fathers, the sisters and brothers of some of the people who gather with us for worship, for protest, for crying out to God. We make the pain visible.

We've been saying the same words in the same place with some of the same people for the past four years, and nothing seems to change. Year after year, political leaders ignore God's call to set these captives free. Year after year, presidents and police impose a strategy of deportation that tears apart families by banishing mothers and fathers from their households. "We must put border security first," the politicians say, as the rest of us are left to console children in grief and to sustain neighbors who live in fear—to suffer with those who suffer.

**In this country I've found a home** in the Mennonite church, in the Anabaptist tradition, where we reach back to the wisdom of communities who have endured exile and arrest, immigration and deportation—people who remember the violence of princes who claimed to own the earth, people who remember political leaders who claimed the right to police borders established by bloodshed.

Anabaptists and Mennonites have offered words of worship and protest from Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

As the Mennonite historian John D. Roth explains, for the early Anabaptists "the claim that the earth is the Lord's was a form of resistance, especially to the political rulers of their day … the appeal to Psalm 24:1 was a powerful statement of a different allegiance and loyalty."

To worship the God of the Psalmist involves a protest against political authorities that try to usurp God's dominion over the earth.

"Nobody should take what is God's," wrote Peter Walpot, a 16th-century Anabaptist who lived in the context of the Christianized powers of Europe as kings and bishops divided up the globe by inventing borders on their maps of "the Americas," which they claimed as their property.

Today we live with the legacy of their maps; we live under the dominion of colonialism's borders. Arguments about U.S. immigration policy and border security assume the legitimacy of a geography invented by colonialism, a world invented by rulers who craved divine power over creation.

**Since these borders** won't go away anytime soon, we will plan on gathering again at the ICE detention center on Thursday during Holy Week next year. We will worship and protest, joining our voices to the Anabaptists and Mennonites who have proclaimed the good news of Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." TM

# The global church is young

The road was thick with fog in the Nicaraguan mountains high above Managua on Sunday morning as we made our way to church in the tiny village of El Crucero. In fact, we heard the enthusiastic singing of the Ebenezer Mennonite congregation before we actually saw the church. The building itself, home to a congregation of about 30 members, was under construction. A new roof spanned walls still awaiting windows and doors. But as my wife and I stepped inside, the thing we noticed first was not the sod floor or the plastic chairs. Rather, it was the children—nearly 50 smiling faces encircling the adults like a choir of angels.

Several years ago, the Ebenezer congregation began serving a meal each Saturday to the children of the neighborhood, followed by singing and Bible school activities. Gradually, some of the children attended church. Today, the small congregation can expect to host anywhere from 40 to 60 children on a Sunday morning. During the sermon, sounds of their Sunday school program filtered in through the open windows. Afterward, they enjoyed a snack, stacked their chairs and played outside.

**Though the story behind the Ebenezer** congregation's outreach to children may be unique, its experience points to a larger reality in the global church: in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the church is young. The Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile—a 2010 survey of 12 church conferences affiliated with Eastern Mennonite Missions—provides some startling statistics. Whereas the average age of members in Lancaster Mennonite Conference churches is 53, in eight of the other churches the average age is 38 or younger. And in the Meserte Kristos Church in Ethiopia, the largest Mennonite national church, the average age is only 32. In 11 of the 12 churches surveyed, two-thirds or more of the members are still within childbearing age (18-45), suggesting that children are going to be a central part of their ministry in the coming decades.

The consequences for Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and the global church are clear. First, the need for Christian education has never been more urgent. Traditionally, our mission agencies focused their attention primarily on Bible schools and seminaries. In the meantime, however, many Mennonite churches around the world have begun to establish primary and secondary schools for their youth. As they seek help with curriculum and pedagogy, several fundamentalist Christian organizations have been quick to offer accreditation, with the expectation that the schools will formally adopt their curriculum and their confession of faith.

While it may be tempting for those of us who care about Anabaptist-Mennonite pedagogy to be critical from afar, the pressing question remains: What alternative do we have to offer? Could we imagine a global curriculum for Mennonite primary and secondary schools, shaped around the MWC Shared Convictions?

The need for Christian education has never been more urgent.

**Alongside the challenge of Christian education**, the youthful demographic of the global church also suggests new opportunities. Throughout the history of the Christian church, renewal movements have almost always been led by young people—emerging leaders who have caught a vision of the inherited tradition but are moved to recast the forms to better fit the context of their day. To be sure, the spirits of renewal need to be continually tested and discerned. But a church that desires a future must entrust its young people with positions of responsibility and leadership, knowing that living traditions are always renewed at the cusp of generational transitions.

Following the service at Ebenezer, I spent some time in conversation with several children and young people. Why, I asked Benito, did he attend the congregation? His response was simple. "I like to sing," he said. "I like the stories at Sunday school and I feel safe here. Here the people are good to me." Eventually, no doubt, Benito will discover even more reasons to be part of the people of God. But for now his answer seems like a good foundation to build on.

If he and the children in our congregations around the world continue to see their church as a place that enjoys singing, shares good stories from Scripture and provides a haven of safety and love, then the future of the church will be in good hands for the next generation. TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

# Obesity a problem of health, not weight

Many agree that the United States has an obesity problem. And it goes beyond this country. "The percentage of obese humans globally has doubled in the past 28 years," writes Robert H. Lustig in his book *Fat Chance: Beating the Odds Against Sugar, Processed Food, Obesity and Disease* (Hudson Street Press, 2012, $25.95). But not everyone agrees about how to address the problem.

In her review of the book in the June 26 *Christian Century*, LaVonne Neff writes that "Lustig's number one concern is health, not weight." Getting bigger is not the problem, he says. Many people who are obese are metabolically healthy and have normal life spans. But the increase of obesity has been accompanied by an increase in "type 2 diabetes, lipid disorders, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, hypertension, polycystic ovarian disease, heart disease, cancer and possibly dementia," writes Neff.

**What ties these diseases together?** Most are associated with "the body's response to the flood of insulin released to deal with the excess sugars most of us imbibe," writes Neff.

Lustig argues that many of our health problems today "can be traced to the inordinate amount of fructose—fruit sugar—we consume." Much of that comes from high-fructose corn syrup, which the U.S. government subsidizes. It's a cheap sweetener "used in everything from soft drinks to pasta sauce to whole grain bread," writes Neff. It's also in concentrated fruit sweeteners.

Actual fruit is good for us; this stuff isn't. Lustig writes: "Our current fructose consumption has increased fivefold compared to 100 years ago, and has more than doubled in the last 30 years."

Why the increase? Lustig blames the government and the food industry, and he doesn't hold out much hope for changing either one. Neff writes: "Makers of convenience foods stuff them with sugar to lengthen shelf life and attract consumers, especially children. Soft drinks and junk foods are readily available in schools and in corner stores pandering to the after-school trade."

Lustig writes that "there are no government-imposed bans on the marketing of high-sugar-content products to children in the United States." In May 2012, Chile became the first nation to ban junk food marketing to children.

The Sugar Association, corn growers and many others lobby Congress to keep such bans from happening.

Last year, Mayor Bloomberg of New York tried to ban large containers of soft drinks and was ridiculed by many citizens, who cried out for their freedom to harm themselves.

I have several friends who simply by stopping a daily practice of drinking soft drinks lost a significant number of pounds and—more importantly—felt healthier.

**Eliminating fructose from our diet** is no easy task, but perhaps we can reduce the amount we use and look for its presence in the food we buy. And if you're buying something other than fresh fruit and vegetables, it's likely there in some form.

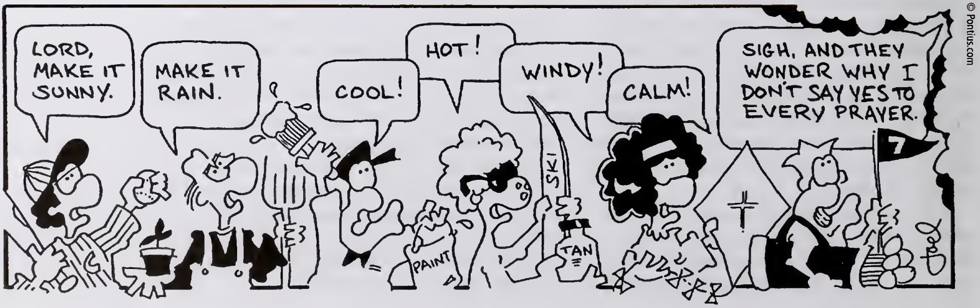
Despite his pessimistic title, Lustig ends his book on a hopeful note, writes Neff, as he calls on people to make noise. After all, change has happened, such as "bans on smoking in public, the use of designated drivers, airbags in cars, and condom dispensers in public bathrooms. All unfathomable 30 years ago."

Neff ends her review with a theological reflection: "We can eat real (not processed) food. We can exercise. We can join with others to demand accountability from the kings and merchants. We can hope for the time when the fruit is restored and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

Our faith calls us to care for our own health and the health of others.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


LORD, MAKE IT SUNNY.
MAKE IT RAIN.
COOL!
HOT!
WINDY!
CALM!
SIGH. AND THEY WONDER WHY I DON'T SAY YES TO EVERY PRAYER.
SKI
PAINT
TAN
7
Joel

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*—compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “It’s very annoying following this person of Christ around, because he’s very demanding of your life.” *—Bono in an interview on Focus on the Family*

## Talk to your child, not on your cell phone

Linguist Deborah Fallows writes that research on the effects of adult-child conversation makes a strong case for putting cell phones away when you’re around children.

A 2009 study published in *Pediatrics* showed that “children exposed to more conversational give-and-take with adults scored higher at every stage of language proficiency.”

This and two other studies suggest, Fallows writes, that social interaction is important to early language learning. She finds it ironic that “in this era when child-rearing is the focus of unprecedented imagination, invention, sophistication and expense, something as simple and pleasurable as conversing with our children can be overlooked.”*—The Atlantic*

**3%**
of Americans have a modern semiautomatic rifle, such as an AR-15 (the consumer version of an M16)

**84%**
of owners are men

**86%**
are white

**60%**
have two or more semiautomatic rifles
*—Mother Jones*

## Eat more insects, says U.N. agency

The United Nations is promoting edible insects as a low-fat, high-protein food for people, pets and livestock. According to the U.N., they come with appetizing side benefits: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and livestock pollution, creating jobs in developing countries and feeding the millions of hungry people in the world.

Two billion people eat insects, largely in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Rome-based U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said May 13 as it issued a report exploring edible insect potential. Beetles and caterpillars are the most common meals among the more than 1,900 edible insect species that people eat.

Scientists who have studied the nutritional value of edible insects have found that red ants, small grasshoppers and some water beetles pack (gram-per-gram or ounce-per-ounce) enough protein to rank with lean ground beef while having less fat per gram. Edible insects also contain useful minerals, such as iron, magnesium, phosphorous, selenium and zinc. Insects on average can convert 2 kilograms (4.4 pounds) of feed into 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of edible meat. In comparison, cattle require 8 kilograms (17.6 pounds) of feed to produce a kilogram of meat. Most insects raised for food are likely to produce fewer environmentally harmful greenhouse gases than livestock, the U.N. agency says.*—Associated Press*

## Moral Mondays

Every Monday, the Rev. William J. Barber II, president of the state’s NAACP chapter, leads demonstrators who gather outside the North Carolina Statehouse before marching two by two into the legislative building to be handcuffed by police and arrested for failing to obey orders to disperse. Since assuming the state presidency eight years ago, Barber has waged numerous battles challenging local and state governments to extend educational opportunities, broaden the voting base, provide health care and more generally lift up the poor.*—Religion News Service*

## Americans love Bible but don’t read it

More than half of Americans think the Bible has too little influence on a culture they see in moral decline, yet only one in five Americans read the Bible on a regular basis, according to a new survey.*—Religion News Service*

## Restrictions on religion increase

A new study finds that the already high level of restrictions on religion in the Middle East and North Africa—whether resulting from government policies or from social hostilities—continued to increase in 2011, when most of the political uprisings known as the Arab Spring occurred. The findings run contrary to expectations expressed by many world leaders that the uprisings would lead to greater freedoms for the people of the region, including fewer restrictions on religious beliefs and practices.*—Pew Research Center*

## Numbers to ponder

- Percentage of religious people in five Arab countries who believe women should have the right to initiate divorce: **69**
- Percentage of nonreligious people in those countries who believe women should have the right to initiate divorce: **46**
- Points scored for "quixotry," the highest scoring word in Scrabble history: **365**
- Pounds of toilet paper the average Chinese used in 2008: **0.5**
- Pounds the average European used: **17**
- Pounds the average American used: **50**
- Sheets of toilet paper the average American used per day: **57**

*—Yes! Magazine*

**Speakers call convention-goers to be faithful citizens of God's kingdom while overcoming barriers to God's grace.**

During the opening worship service, convention-goers poured different colored sand into jars to create a beautiful mixture that symbolizes the body of Christ. Photo by Everett J. Thomas

# Citizens beyond walls of separation

by Gordon Houser

After a long period of deciding whether or not to come to Phoenix for Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention July 1-5, more than 4,600 came to celebrate being "Citizens of God's Kingdom: Healed in Hope," the convention's theme.

**At the opening adult worship service on July 1**, Tina Begay, a Navajo and a member of the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA, welcomed people to the Southwest, where Apaches, Arapahos, Navajos, Hopis, Pueblos, Zunis and other tribes reside.

Iris de León-Hartshorn, Carol Roth and Erica Littlewolf paid tribute to Richard Twiss, a Native leader who was to be the opening speaker but who died in February. Roth said that Twiss encouraged Native Christians to embrace their own culture while also following Jesus Christ.

Cheryl Bear, who took his place as speaker, sang a song she wrote in honor of Twiss, accompanying herself on a drum. She then presented bad news and good news.

> The good news is that God sent Jesus to bring life, not to destroy Native culture.—Cheryl Bear

She recounted some of the history of Native peoples' encounter with Europeans in North America. "Evangelism and assimilation went hand in hand," she said.

Assimilation meant that Native culture was considered invalid. The doctrine of discovery taught that the land was empty, ignoring the fact that more than 1,000 Native tribes inhabited North America.

One of the most destructive acts of whites toward Natives was removing Native children from their homes and placing them in boarding schools, where the teachers sought to "kill the Indian within," not allowing them to speak their language or dress in Native clothes.

Bear, who is a member of Nadleh Whut'en, a tribe in northern British Columbia, talked about four foundations of the Native worldview: Creator, creation, community and culture. The good news, she said, is that God sent Jesus to bring life, not to destroy Native culture.

Native Christians have learned to do re-evangelism, telling the gospel in a Native way. For example, some have presented Jesus as the cleansing ceremony.

She invited people to adopt a posture of humility as we welcome others to faith. She concluded with the image of Jesus offshore in a canoe, waiting for our sign of welcome.

**The July 2 adult worship service** focused on the plight of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

After showing a video about undocumented young adults, Iris de León-Hartshorn asked for support for a DREAMERs fund. The money will be placed in a fund to help undocumented Mennonite youth, called DREAMERs, pay for the cost of applying for U.S. Citizenship.

The morning's speaker, Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño of the United Methodist Church, called on the audience to stand with immigrants, whose suffering grows each day.

She has been amazed, she said, at the opposition of Christians to immigration reform.

Some of the comments she has heard have been "nasty and vile."

One church member reacted to her call to care for immigrant children suffering in the desert by shoving the Communion wafer back at her during a worship service Carcaño led.

▶

Celebrando la Inmigración

Worship leaders Sue Park-Hur (left) and Michelle Armister note the empty chair, representing Iglesia Menonita Hispana, which decided not to come to Phoenix, and immigrants who do not feel free to travel in Arizona. Photo by Everett J. Thomas

Welcoming the stranger … is a mandate from God's own heart.—Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño

Iris de León-Hartshorn wears an astronaut suit, demonstrating her dream career as a young person, while she delivers a message to worshipers.
Photo by Everett J. Thomas

This man then asked the church's pastor to kick her out. The pastor said he couldn't because, he said, "She is the bishop; the pulpit is hers."

Carcaño expressed concern that sometimes the church lets others define us and miss who we are. "We sojourn in the world, but we are not of the world," she said.

She looked at various Scriptures and said that "welcoming the stranger … is a mandate from God's own heart."

She carried out a correspondence with a Christian who finally wrote that he "longed for the day when the church would defend U.S. democracy."

But that is not our task, she said. We are to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, and "though we are citizens of various countries, above all we are citizens of God's kingdom."

The service concluded with an offering for the DREAMERs fund. This, plus the offering from the youth worship, brought in more than $25,000.

**During the shared worship services on July 3**, Mennonite Church USA denominational ministers Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann invited all pastors and conference ministers to stand along the front of the auditorium.

Shue and Kauffmann expressed thanks for their following the call to serve as pastors and prayed a prayer of blessing.

Representatives from each agency of Mennonite Church USA and *The Mennonite* gave the hundreds of pastors and conference ministers ribbons that said, "I said yes" (drawn from Numbers) to attach to their name tags.

These gave them a $25 discount on items at the MennoMedia bookstore at the convention. The agencies and *The Mennonite* provided the funds to cover these discounts.

As the pastors walked back to their seats, people applauded. In one of the worship services, youth formed an arch with their hands for the pastors to walk through.

In his address to both worship sessions, staggered because of space limitations, Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, called on worshipers to commit all they have to Jesus because all our possessions belong to him anyway.

He compared entering the kingdom of God to going through airport security, "except when you get inside you can't find where your stuff is." He held out his watch, wallet, cell phone and keys and pointed out how these represent parts of our lives that are on loan from Jesus.

Stutzman said, "We are called to live as faithful citizens of the kingdom of God while also being citizens of, say, the United States."

He closed by inviting people to come forward to commit themselves to God's kingdom.

All our possessions belong to Jesus. —Ervin Stutzman

**In the July 4 evening adult worship service**, Meghan Good, pastor of Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church, recounted the Bible's tradition of God refusing to be held captive by walls. She went on to challenge the church not to work against God's mission of breaking down the walls we build.

Using humorous, poetic language, Good told of Israel's repeated attempts to build a temple where God dwelt, only to have it torn down. She noted that "it's easy for us to read Israel's mind [because] we need only read our own."

We tend to believe, she said, that "barbed wire and stone walls are a small price to pay for the future of our children."

The church knows this logic every bit as much as the nation. Even our architecture shows our theology, Good said. Our church buildings tend to have high walls and frosted glass windows that prevent us from looking outward. And we have developed subtle ways of keeping others away.

"We live in an age when walls are crumbling at an alarming rate," Good said. And it seems that no matter how much the church builds up its programs, fewer people join us.

We have made border patrol our mission, she said, and in doing so "we have lined ourselves up against God [because] Jesus lives to tear walls down."

This is not new news, Good said. It's been this way from the beginning. God has been turning our

The borders we die to hold, Jesus died to tear down.
—Meghan Good

holy systems into holy rubble. God's mission is bigger than simple preservation, she said. "[God] is building a world where truth is not a possession, … where holiness is not what we avoid but what we embrace."

We join God's mission when we loosen our grip and let the walls we've built fall down.

"The borders we die to hold, Jesus died to tear down." Our choice is either to fight God and fail or join God in making holy rubble.

Lives have been shattered in the defense of walls, Good said. Meanwhile, "we've neglected the triumph of the truth and celebrated our grasp of it."

Good closed by inviting people to come forward and wash their hands as a symbolic way of repenting of our sins of wall-building and being cleansed by God's grace.

Good closed by inviting people to come forward and wash their hands as a symbolic way of repenting of our sins of wall-building and being cleansed by God's grace.

**On July 5, following the adult worship service** in the evening, between 1,500 and 2,000 convention-goers took to the streets on a 1.5-mile walk through downtown Phoenix to pray and sing.

Evening speaker and new moderator of Mennonite Church USA Elizabeth Soto Albrecht led the procession. Many wore or held light sticks handed out during the worship.

Local police blocked off the route for the crowd, which sang and prayed while passing "places of suffering and hope." The group walked past hotels and prayed for restaurant and hotel workers, passed a county jail and detention facility and prayed for detainees, prisoners, guards and their families, and passed the offices of Wells Fargo and prayed about banks and the for-profit detention system.

At Civic Space Park, the crowd gathered in small groups to pray for their local communities, and the larger group sang several songs and prayed the Lord's Prayer in English and Spanish. They were joined by some who chose a shorter, half-mile route.

Others had the option to stay in the convention center and pray there. Given the triple-digit heat, some chose not to walk.

In her sermon, Soto Albrecht emphasized that "we are connected." We included herself with immigrants who came to the United States "not with the American dream but with God's dream." They came because they had no job.

We walk for immigrants who cannot walk the streets of Phoenix.
—Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

She called on hearers to share the light God has given. "Don't let the darkness keep you from showing the light of God in your life," she said.

She introduced the prayer walk by noting that "we walk for immigrants who cannot walk the streets of Phoenix." TM

Natalie Francisco (left) and Chuck Neufeld were part of the band in the adult worship sessions. Photo by Everett J. Thomas

## Assembly passes resolutions on immigration, child protection and creation care.

PHOENIX
Mennonite Church USA Convention 2013
Ciudadanos del Reino de Dios
Citizens of God's Kingdom
Mennonite Church USA
God's
Kingdom
ALLEGIANCE

Delegate sessions during Phoenix 2013 were "live-streamed" by Executive Board staff. While delegates met in table groups, "hosts" Jeff Hochstetler (center) and Shé Hall interviewed Mennonite Church USA leaders. At right, they interview moderator J. Richard "Dick" Thomas (left) on July 2.

Photos on pages 16-19 by Everett J. Thomas

# Delegates focus on immigration

by Everett J. Thomas

Delegates seldom give a speaker a standing ovation during Mennonite Church USA conventions. But Denver Seminary professor of Old Testament Danny Carroll was so eloquent, inspiring and entertaining, the Phoenix 2013 delegates did just that at the end of his 90-minute presentation and question-and-answer period on July 2 (see page 18).

We … resolve to … embody a fuller expression of God's love, justice and grace to undocumented and undocumentable immigrants.—Resolutions Committee statement adopted by delegate assembly

Framing the Old Testament accounts of Abram, Joseph and Ruth as immigration stories, Carroll challenged Mennonite Church USA to think about U.S. immigration issues as Christians rather than as U.S. citizens.

"The challenge for you," Carroll said, "is, How do Mennonites think of immigration? Begin with Romans 12—don't be conformed to the world, don't be conformed to political ideologies. Romans 13 is the government. The Christians are Romans 12. The Christian position is the Word of God and Jesus on the cross."

The primary focus of the 2013 delegate sessions was current U.S. immigration dynamics and whether to revise the statement on immigration adopted by the delegates in 2003. However, it became clear during the July 5 discussion on the immigration resolution, that more conversation will be needed before settling on new language.

Randall Justice, a delegate from the Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church, said that the 2003 statement had "a lot of implicit political language" representing the politics of a decade ago.

Roberta Cabezas, a delegate from James Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., asked that the word "undocumentable" be included in the resolution.

"People don't know how hard it is to get documents," Cabezas said.

Ron Copeland, delegate from Early Church in Harrisonburg, Va., asked that the new resolution use language consistently.

"A word of caution about demonizing the [U.S. immigration] system," Copeland said. "It's not one big, monolithic system out to hurt people."

Margie Caraballo, a delegate from Templo Alabanza Menonita in Moline, Ill., said that the 2003 statement had "us versus them language" and had "no responsibility placed on current immigrants or Hispanic congregations."

In the end, the resolutions committee adopted a statement that affirmed the 2003 resolution while calling for more refinement of the 10-year-old resolution, using feedback from the table groups, additional Constituency Leaders Council processing in the future and a final proposal from the Executive Board.

"We recognize that our witness to God's embrace of the stranger in our midst is not complete," said the statement. "Therefore, we reaffirm and resolve to update our churchwide commitments in light of delegate feedback in order to embody a fuller expression of God's love, justice and grace to undocumented and undocumentable immigrants."

**The 2013 delegate assembly began** with several housekeeping actions on July 2, and Mennonite Church USA's Leadership Discernment Committee presented its ballot of new members to be elected to various Mennonite Church USA boards by affirmation (see page 36). Those ballots were collected in the first afternoon session, with the results announced in the second session. Ninety-four percent checked the "select all" box.

In the second session on July 2, Mennonite Church USA moderator Dick Thomas announced that the first of two offerings to be taken during the week totaled nearly $25,000, with the adults giving $13,851 and the youth giving $11,028. (The total eventually came to $25,047.28.) The funds will be used to help the DREAMERs fund, which provides financial assistance for undocumented youth and young adults who want to initiate the process of becoming citizens.

This session focused on the churchwide goal of Christian formation. Getting special focus was the *Shine* Sunday school curriculum being created by MennoMedia and Western District Conference's leadership in the Year of the Bible initiative.

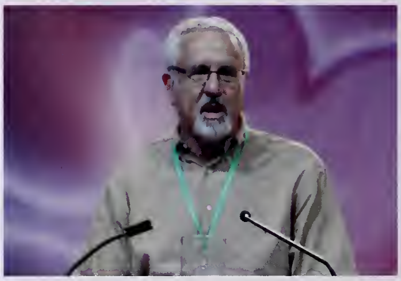
Studies show that if we don't give constant attention to how institutions relate to their church, the institutions will drift away from the church.—Rick Stiffney

Other sessions during the week focused on additional churchwide priorities, including Christian community, holistic Christian witness, stewardship, leadership development and undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation.

**The 627 delegates** also quietly adopted several resolutions that mark major changes in the church. The most significant: embracing Mennonite Health Services Alliance as the fifth agency of Mennonite Church USA. Rick Stiffney, MHS Alliance's CEO, had been shepherding the process along for nearly a decade. (See page 32.)

By becoming an agency, the 74 MHS Alliance member organizations—including retirement com- ▶

During the July 4 delegate session, youth from the Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., report on their trip to the U.S.-Mexico border. Speaking for the group are (from left) Alicia Thomas, Tyrel Baldridge and Katja Norton. "Our eyes were really opened," Norton said. "Border patrol people and the people trying to cross are doing [what they do] for their families."



Denver Seminary's Old Testament professor Danny Carroll framed the stories of Abram, Joseph and Ruth as immigration stories in the July 2 delegate session.

munities, hospitals and mental health centers—are now formally connected to Mennonite Church USA.

"This action may take only 10 minutes," Stiffney said on July 5, "but it is not inconsequential. We're shaping a trajectory [that will bring the institutions closer to the church]. Studies show that if we don't give constant attention to how institutions relate to their church, the institutions will drift away from the church."

The delegate assembly vote was unanimous.

**Two other resolutions**, "Protecting Our Children and Youth" and "Creation Care," also passed overwhelmingly after minimal discussion. The limited discussion was intentional.

With only 11.5 hours of delegate time instead of the usual 18 hours, Mennonite Church USA leaders had delegates adopt rules that meant most of the remaining discussion time was given to updating the 2003 resolution on immigration.

The delegate session ended on July 5 with the installation of Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Lancaster, Pa., as the new moderator and Patricia Shelly, Newton, Kan., as the new moderator-elect (see photo below).

**Pink Mennos**: Over a period of about 30 minutes on July 5, some 60 Pink Menno activists and their allies walked silently into the midst of the delegate assembly and stood waiting. Some displayed photos of LGBTQ friends or family members they supported. Others carried signs. One young man carried an empty chair to replicate the empty chair on stage for Hispanic Mennonites and their supporters who elected to skip the Phoenix convention because of Arizona's immigration laws and the risk of deportation. When all the Pink Mennos were in place, moderator Dick Thomas suspended the discussion of resolutions addressing creation care and protections for children and youth. He then invited Pink Menno leader Katie Hochstedler to read a statement from Pink Menno. Hochstedler is a delegate from Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis.

"Today we bring before you our faces, our yearnings, our bodies, our dreams, our faith and declare that we refuse to be strangers to one another," the statement said. "As followers of Jesus, we cannot and will not rest until the Mennonite church abandons its exclusionary impulses and embraces the width and breadth of God's welcome, so that all may participate fully and God's kindom (sic) is made whole."

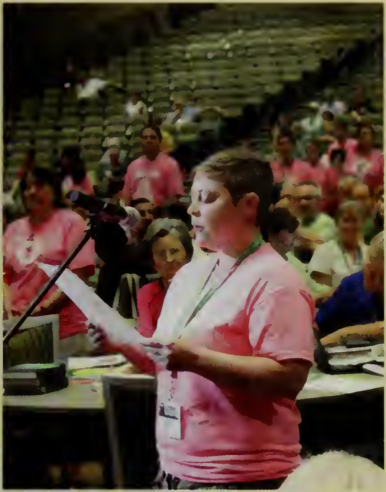
Thomas asked the assembly to pause in silence and then offered a prayer. The delegate assembly then resumed discussion of the resolutions on creation care and protecting children. TM

## 'Mennonite Church USA, are you ready for two women to lead you?'

This was the question moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht (left) asked the delegate assembly after she and moderator-elect Patricia Shelly were installed on July 5. Shelly's rejoinder: "Ready or not, here we come."

# Scenes from delegate assembly at Phoenix 2013

**The Mennonite Game**: Illinois Mennonite Conference leader Chuck Neufeld put all surnames in his conference on a poster to illustrate that all are "good Mennonite names."



**Pink Mennos**: Katie Hochstedler read a statement from the goup during the July 5 delegate session. See the story on page 18.

#MennoPray - Praye

**Table talk**: Most delegate sessions had time for table discussions and then some opportunity to report to the assembly from those discussions. Several tables, including this one, were for delegates wishing to speak in Spanish.

**Speakers call youth to engage immigration rights and offer lessons on identity and unity in Christ.**

Youth come forward during a worship service to be anointed with oil. Photo by Lowell Brown

# Youth respond to calls for healing and hope

by Anna Groff

Near the end of the convention in Phoenix, the youth responded in large numbers to the anointing service. Approximately 2,750 youth attended Phoenix 2013 July 1-5.

After actor Ingrid De Sanctis presented her emotional message on July 4, hundreds of youth went forward to share with a pastor, pray and receive anointing—returning to their seats in tearful silence.

The lines were so long that Glen Guyton had to ask extra pastors and leaders in the audience to step in to help with the anointing.

"We ran out of oil," said Guyton, director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA.

Throughout the week, youth heard from speakers who provided testimonies and confessions, information and encouragement on how to engage immigration rights and lessons on identity and unity in Christ.

God dreams it, Jesus announced it, John saw it, and we get to live it. —Hal Shrader

**July 1 evening: Hal Shrader**

Hal Shrader, pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., addressed the youth in the opening worship.

He began with a video of himself re-enacting a humorous and dramatic dream in which he thought he almost missed his scheduled speaking time.

He started his speech by describing the different ways people dream in their sleep and talked about the importance of dreams in the Bible, especially in the book of Genesis.

Then he discussed the way we discuss dreams as what we aspire to be.

"When we're young we have all sorts of people telling us to follow our dreams—and you should follow your dreams," he said.

Even better, he said, is that not only do we dream, but God dreams of a better future for the world.

"God dreams it, Jesus announced it, John saw it, and we get to live it," he said in closing.

After Shrader's message, worship leaders Stephen "Tig" Intagliata, Bluffton (Ohio) University campus pastor, and Andrea Fernanda De Avila, a student at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., explained the purpose of the three empty chairs in worship to the youth.

The chairs recognize those from the following groups who are not attending Phoenix 2013—Iglesia Menonita Hispana, Mennonite immigrants of all nationalities and those standing in solidarity with IMH.

Immigration rights are human rights. —Isabel Castillo

**July 2 morning: Isabel Castillo**

Isabel Castillo, immigration activist, encouraged the youth gathered at Phoenix 2013 to advocate for immigration rights.

"Immigration rights are human rights," she said, adding that Scripture calls us to "welcome the stranger."

Castillo, 28, provided tangible ways to get involved, such as signing petitions, calling upon government officials to pass the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) or starting a local group in one's church or school.

She told the youth that they may be close to someone who is undocumented and not even know it. It could be "your best friend, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, someone from your church," she said.

▶

The youth worship band leads the youth in worship. Photo by Lowell Brown

CITIZENS
Sarah
Polly
Olivia
Brooklyn
Bethany

From left, Sarah, Polly, Olivia, Brooklyn and Bethany show off one of many mascots at the youth worship.
Photo by Lowell Brown

Castillo is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., and founder of DREAM Activist Virginia and co-founder of National Immigrant Youth Alliance.

Castillo began by sharing her story of immigration. At age 6 she moved from Mexico to Harrisonburg, Va., where her parents started jobs at the poultry plants. They encouraged her to work hard in school to avoid that kind of work.

She achieved a 4.0 GPA in high school, but when she went to her guidance counselor to discuss college applications, he was unable to help her, as he had never worked with an undocumented student before.

She did not know which colleges would accept undocumented students, and she lacked a social security number to apply for loans and grants. So, for the year after graduation, she put in long hours at a local restaurant.

That year she also learned that EMU would accept her. She earned a social work degree and went on to "be the change she wanted to see" through her advocacy work. Her story is not unique, as more than 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year.

### July 2 evening: Rachel Swartzendruber Miller

Rachel Swartzendruber Miller confessed elements of her past to the youth at the July 2 evening worship.

She told of how she was labeled a "slow reader" and "bad speller" as a young student, propelling her to cheat throughout high school, even in the classes where she excelled.

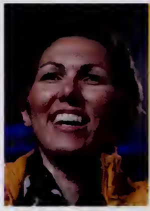
She also talked about her picky eating habits, family insecurities and her desire for the familiarity of her small community in Iowa.

However, through her college experiences and travels, her worldview expanded. She also no longer longed for sameness but for newness and diversity.

"This picky eater fell in love with sushi. ... I started to see marriage and family not as a mandate but a choice. I learned to listen, which I desperately needed to do," she said.

Using several props, she outlined the three main areas of our identity: our difference, our past and our sameness. However, through God you can "love your identity just as you are," she said.

"You're given an opportunity to believe your Creator and say, 'I'm enough,'" she said. "I'm going to assume that you wish you were something more. Stop wishing."



You are beloved, put your ID in that. —Rachel Swartzendruber Miller

By leaving her comfort zone and pushing herself to work hard in college, she also let go of her identity as "less than."

"I found other ways of finding value in myself," she said. "Through a lot of hard work, through commitment and many occasions of swallowing my pride, I can stand before you today, a Ph.D. student—something I thought I could never do."

Swartzendruber Miller closed by telling the youth, "You are beloved, put your ID in that." She is vice president of admissions at Hesston (Kan.) College and former director of convention planning for Mennonite Church USA.

### July 4 evening: Ingrid De Sanctis

Ingrid De Sanctis' honest speech about growing up as a Pentecostal pastor's daughter in New Jersey moved the youth to respond. She described her childhood in the 1970s during the age of hippies and the Jesus Movement.

"I remember our father casting a demon out of some hippie on our front porch," De Sanctis said. "I was the preacher's daughter. It was my identity."

But inside her home was trouble. There is a story about "Dad the preacher and Dad the human." When she was age 13, many women left her father's church due to inappropriate actions by her father.

I understand broken stuff.
—Ingrid De Sanctis

"My family just split in half," she told the youth. "I understand broken stuff."

When she was 22, her father went into a coma after health problems and died. About eight years later, she went back to New Jersey to visit the people who used to attend her father's church. She felt scared of what they would think of her and her father.

"One by one these people I had not seen in 16 years … would squeeze me and hold me tight and say, 'Ingy, we loved your father. He brought us to Jesus. We forgive him,' " she said.

De Sanctis ended with, "Church—it is not perfect. That's OK. … It is about the people—messy and broken—working out and trying to follow this beautiful Jesus."

**July 5 morning: Luke Hartman**

On July 5, Luke Hartman encouraged the youth to avoid the pressures of society. Hartman is vice president for enrollment at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

God is at work in your life even in the midst of trials and tribulations.
—Luke Hartman

He shared a story about how he bullied another student to fit in during his freshman year.

At lunch, the popular boys in his class flicked pennies and watched a boy with developmental disabilities chase after them. They called him "Penny Boy."

One day, Hartman suggested they superglue a penny to the ground to see what would happen. He immediately felt intense guilt.

"Righteousness isn't about rules and regulations," he told the youth. "Righteousness is about 'right relatedness' and being in relationship with people you might not want to be in relationship with."

Hartman went on to describe his struggles growing up as adopted into a Mennonite family and the conflicts he felt as a person of color in the church.

"God is at work in your life even in the midst of trials and tribulations," he said. "He chooses you."

**July 5 evening: Glen Guyton**

At closing evening worship, Glen Guyton told the youth to remember three main points: "Love God, believe in his gift of Jesus Christ and love his people."

Love God, believe in his gift of Jesus Christ and love his people.
—Glen Guyton

The Bible repeats these three messages over and over, he said. Guyton is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA.

"If you do these three, the rest will take care of itself, he said. "I'm not saying your life will be perfect, but it will put everything into perspective."

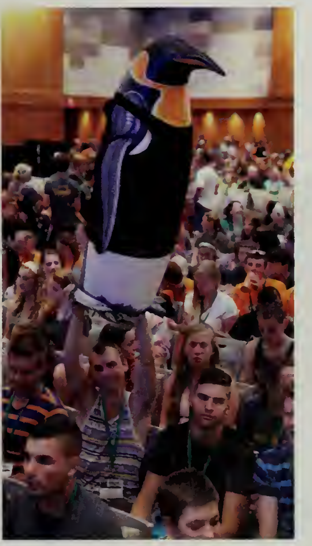
He then read through a litany of Mennonite groups—women, men, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, urban, rural, Birkenstock-wearing, Nike-wearing, LGBTQ, creation care, pink, blue, rich, poor and more.

His daughter joined him onstage and flipped through cards with these descriptions on them, and the youth cheered throughout.

"However you define yourself, don't forget to focus on Jesus," he said.

There are two questions to answer, he told the youth. The first one, God, is my life pleasing to you? The second is, Where are you leading me next?

"If you can answer those questions, who cares what anyone else thinks?" Guyton asked in his closing.



Another mascot in the youth worship.
Photo by Lowell Brown

THIS IS MY
CHURCH

Youth take part in the "Anabaptist game."
Photo by Lowell Brown

# Junior youth play 'Anabaptist game'

A highlight for the junior youth convention at Phoenix 2013 was playing the "Anabaptist game." Children in grades six through eight took part as a way to learn about the persecution Anabaptists faced in the 16th century.

Organized by Michele Hershberger, who teaches Bible at Hesston (Kan.) College, the game includes actors who play the parts of 16th-century Anabaptists and tell their stories to the youth in eight "safe houses."

High school youth acted as guards arrested other students as well as some unsuspecting adults. They took their captives to a "state church" courthouse, where they were tried for their beliefs, including not baptizing infants. Guards took those condemned to a "dungeon." Some were tied up, and guards pretended to flog them. Some ended up in stocks (see photo above).

Ken Rogers (left) and John Bromels entertain the junior youth.
Photo by Lowell Brown

The junior youth also worshiped together each day and heard from speakers Marissa King, who teaches education at Hesston College; Bonita Garber, a graduate of Hesston College; Dustin Galyon, men's basketball coach at Hesston College; and Hal Shrader, lead pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz. Their talks were entitled "What Mirror Are You Using?," "Who Is My Neighbor?" and "Healing and Hope: Dream It."

The youth also enjoyed the antics of John Bromels, an actor, writer, teacher and fund-raiser from Cincinnati, Ohio, and Ken Rogers, a musician from Hesston College (see photo at left). They use songs, humor and improvisation and include the youth in their improv.

Kathryn Lehman Harsha, a sponsor, said she came with several youth from her congregation, North Baltimore Mennonite Church. The youth were divided into groups of 12 or so, and two sponsors stayed with each group through the week. One of these groups consisted of youth from Phoenix.

The junior youth also took up an offering to support the DREAMERs fund, which provides financial assistance for undocumented youth and young adults who want to initiate the process of becoming citizens. The offering brought in $2,410.43.—*Gordon Houser*

# Children learn about prayer and Bible stories

Almost 70 children participated in the children's convention at Phoenix 2013, according to director Amy Nissley Stauffer, who has just begun as associate pastor of congregational life at Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.

The children, having just completed kindergarten through grade five, learned about prayer during their week together. They learned different prayers, including table graces and the Lord's Prayer.

They also spent time praying for the delegates and made prayer leaves and bookmarks, which they delivered to the delegate assembly on July 5. The delegates also prayed for them.

Each day the children visited the exhibit hall, where the various agencies and schools led them in activities.

Nelson Kraybill, pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., talked to them about how kids can live upside down. They looked at four stories from Scripture: the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), the scribes and the widow's offering (Luke 20:45-21:4), Jesus calling Levi (Luke 5:27-32) and the betrayal and arrest of Jesus (Luke 22:47-52).

Children deliver bookmarks to delegates at Phoenix 2013.

Photo by Lowell Brown

The children made a daylong trip to the Arizona Science Center. Representatives from Mennonite Mission Network and the Lion and Lamb Peace Center visited them.

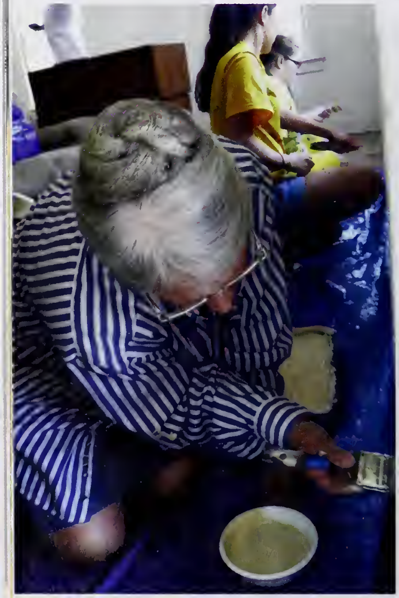
Jenna Boettger Boring and Darla Schrock led the children in music.

Stauffer said that the time with the children was exciting and that "the kids were able to connect with the denomination and to interact with the biblical stories.—*Gordon Houser*

Children listen to Bible stories.

Photo by Lowell Brown

# Youth do servant projects despite the heat



**Despite temperatures as high as 116 degrees, 2,130 participants from the junior high, youth and adult conventions took part in servant projects during Phoenix 2013. Participants washed cars and windows, painted, picked up trash and, given the heat, drank plenty of water.** Photos by Lowell Brown

# Film festival explores immigration, antiracism

by Gordon Houser

Among the many "learning experiences" offered at Phoenix 2013 on July 3-4 was a film festival sponsored by Everence. The festival included feature-length films and documentaries that explore issues of immigration and antiracism.

Four of the five films shown were documentaries, and all are worth seeing. You may want to look for them on Netflix or other source for films on DVD.

**Mad Hot Ballroom** is a delightful documentary about schools in New York City that teach 11-year-olds ballroom dancing. It includes candid interviews with the kids and shows their growing interest in and ability to perform ballroom dancing. The film follows several kids from three public schools as they learn the merengue, rumba, tango, foxtrot and swing while preparing for a citywide competition.

mad hot
Ballroom
"Makes you stand up and cheer out loud!"

Those participating in the learning experience had time to discuss the film after viewing it. We talked about the different cultures shown in the film. Many of the kids were Dominican; a few were Asian. We observed forms of oppression the kids experienced or mentioned: drugs, lack of economic opportunity, lack of safety for girls, that most of the teachers were white, that the male leads each dance.

Some noted ways the kids overcame such oppression: friendship, role models, empathy, common goals. Some said the film challenges our stereotypes about inner-city kids while also showing typical middle school problems.

**The Visitor** is the one feature film shown. It is outstanding (it was No. 2 on my top 10 list from 2008). Briefly, it tells the story of Walter, a professor who is bored with his life and is trying to learn to play the piano. Scheduled to attend a conference in New York City, he arrives at his apartment and finds Tarek Khalil, a Syrian musician, and Zainab, a Senegalese street vendor, living there. He lets these undocumented immigrants stay, and a bond forms. Tarek teaches Walter to play the drum. After an incident on the subway, Tarek is arrested and sent to a detention center for illegal immigrants.

the Visitor

The discussion focused on encountering the other. People mentioned the sense of powerlessness, how innocent people are treated like criminals. One person said it juxtaposed personal transformation and an unchanging system. One said that "visitor" has multiple meanings. Another said it showed the irony of America being "the land of the free."

**Well-Founded Fear** is a documentary about U.S. government workers who interview people seeking asylum in the United States. In the late 1990s, when the film was made, only about 1 percent of applicants were accepted. Today, after 9/11, the percentage is even lower. The workers look for inconsistencies in the applicants' stories.

Facilitator Alicia Horst pointed out during the discussion afterward that INS is gone, and everything is under Homeland Security. She also said that lawyers for applicants can be disciplined if a claim is ruled frivolous.

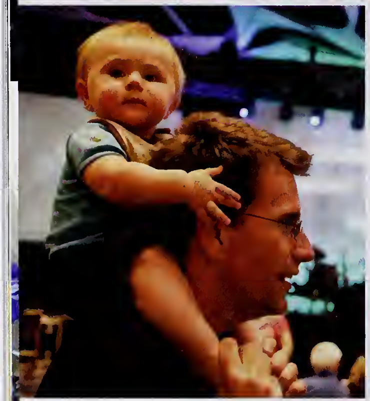
We learned from the film the importance of translation. Getting accepted has as much to do with which worker you get as to your claim. Also, one's presentation is key. And the people who apply have no rights.

**No Man's Land** is a short documentary that covers the plight of the 100,000 unaccompanied minors who enter the United States. The film tells the heartrending story of 13-year-old Maria De Jesus and her cousin Rene, 12, who are arrested trying to cross from Mexico into the United States. Maria's mother is in Chicago and hasn't seen her daughter for seven years.

We divided into small groups and talked about the people portrayed. We discussed issues of human trafficking and drug smuggling.

**Lost Boys of Sudan** is a documentary that follows two teenage Sudanese refugees who make their way to America. Once there, they struggle with extreme cultural differences.

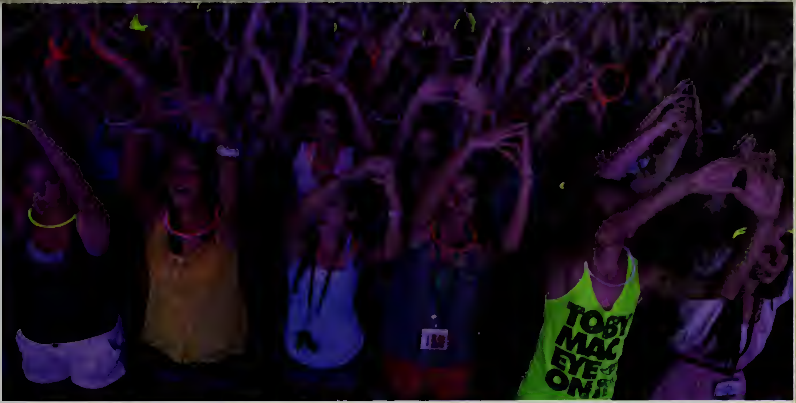
Because it ran concurrently with *No Man's Land*, I did not attend this film. TM



# Photos from Phoenix 2013

**This page, clockwise from top: Mennonite Church USA moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht (third from right) and executive director Ervin Stutzman (second from right) lead a prayer walk through downtown Phoenix on July 5. Many Mennonites at Phoenix 2013 learned salsa dancing. Monty Graber, North Newton, Kan., holds his son Nikolas.**

**All photos by Lowell Brown**



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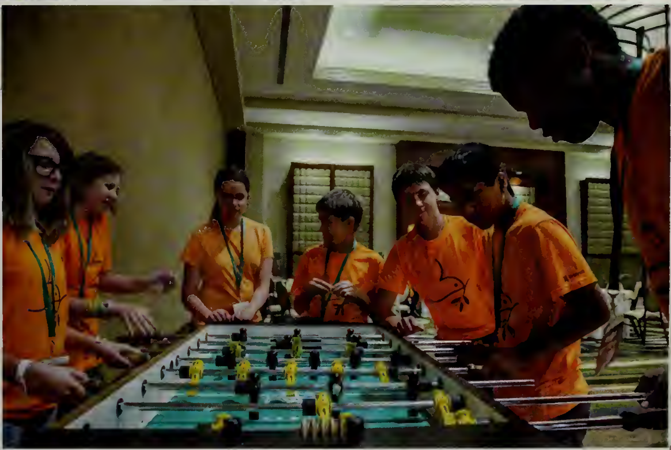
PEACE TEA



**This page, clockwise from top: Christian rapper Sean Slaughter performs. Youth with light sticks at worship on July 5. Peace Tea was sold at the convention. Youth enjoy a game of fusbol. Various ages found cool water in the triple-digit heat. Dave Wert accompanies a prayer vigil outside the Central Court Building for those who have died trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border.** **All photos by Lowell Brown**

Hillary Harder leaps during a scene in *Heavenly Voices*, which shares the stories of Mennonite women of color across the Mennonite church in North America. The actors play multiple roles. Photo by Lowell Brown

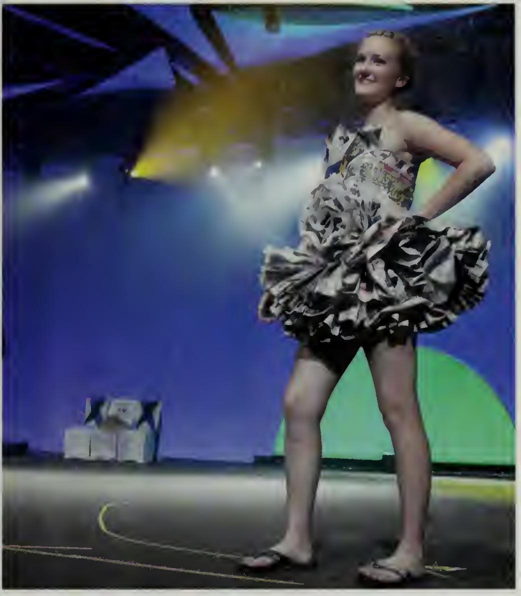
PHOENIX 2013
CITIZENS
of God's Kingdom
HEALED IN HOPE

# Plays, music, dancing

Monkey Butler performs improv comedy shows and trains new students. It is part of Mosaic church, a Christian congregation in Los Angeles that believes creativity is the natural result of spirituality. Photo by Lowell Brown

A scene from *No Roosters in the Desert*, which is based on interviews by Anna Ochoa O'Leary. It follows four women who trek across the desert toward the American dream. On their way, they push the limits of their physical and emotional endurance as they establish connections through the magical storytelling of the youngest, an indigenous woman from Chiapas. Photo by Lowell Brown

Below: Amy Schunn of Phoenix poses during the third Trash Fashion Show, which was held July 4 at Phoenix 2013. Photo by Lowell Brown



Above: Salsa Lessons! was a popular learning experience at Phoenix 2013. Photo by Lowell Brown

The Kansas Bible Company, an 11-man band from Nashville, Tenn., performs. Photo by Lowell Brown

# Back at the table

**Rick Stiffney** is president/CEO of Mennonite Health Services Alliance and a member of Southside Mennonite Fellowship in Elkhart, Ind.

Together, the members of MHS Alliance represent over $1 billion of ministry each year.

I wasn't born in a Mennonite/Anabaptist milieu but chose the Mennonite faith later. As a student at Goshen (Ind.) College, I was captured by a view of Christian faith that integrated word and deed. It seemed audacious but profound. Followers of Jesus should seek to live as Jesus in a troubled world as he taught.

I have been working with Anabaptist/Mennonite-related institutions for all my professional career: as teacher, pastor and later executive staff with the former Mennonite Board of Missions. I served for nearly a decade with Greencroft, a Mennonite-sponsored senior-care provider in Goshen. For the last 15 years, I have served with Mennonite Health Services (MHS) Alliance.

### Holistic witness is at the heart of mission

The integration of word and deed—holistic witness—is a priority for Mennonite Church USA. Why? Jesus taught that following him meant paying attention to human need and responding. Luke 4 sums it up: Feed the hungry, care for the widow, clothe the naked and release the captive. A commitment to service has been a dominant theme in the Anabaptist faith.

### Long history of engagement in responding to need

In the late 19th century, Anabaptist individuals and groups in North America reached out in holistic witness, establishing many types of missions here and around the world. Frederick Living, Frederick, Pa., and Bethesda Home, Goessel, Kan., trace their roots to the late 1800s. This same expression of holistic witness continues today in the form of new ministries, such as the Center for Healing and Hope in Goshen and Elkhart, Ind., which provides urgent-care clinics for people without health insurance.

MHS Alliance and its 74 member ministries represent this rich history of the church's engagement in holistic witness.

### A period of disaffiliation

During the last 30 years, institutional ministries of health and human services have taken a backseat in the Mennonite church. Why?

First, in the 1980s, many denominations created firewalls between their denominational structures and their health and human services institutions out of concern for a perceived risk of liability for the denominations. For Mennonite ministries founded at the national level, the responsibility was shifted an arms-length away to Mennonite Health Services, which had no formal relationship with the denomination.

Second, many sensed that the church's mission practice had moved too far toward service at the expense of evangelism and church planting.

Third, many of these institutions had become large and successful, with capable boards and staff. They didn't need the church in the same ways as before and appeared too complex and professionalized to be governed by the church.

This shift produced unanticipated results. On the upside, the institutions have grown closer to each other and represent a strong network today. On the downside, the firewall accelerated the disaffiliation of church and institution. Health ministries were not part of how the denomination conceptualized mission. They were not at the table. This seemed ironic to me for an Anabaptist tradition that seeks to be holistic in its witness.

### Reclaiming health and human service ministry

At last month's convention in Phoenix, the Mennonite Church USA delegate body took action to embrace MHS Alliance as a fifth agency of the church. Why is this important? I'd like to believe it's the church's desire to strengthen its integration of word and deed.

Together, the members of MHS Alliance represent over $1 billion of ministry each year. They serve tens of thousands of clients, residents and families and employ thousands of staff.

And our 74 members are only part of the story. There are many congregationally based organizations that carry forward the mission of the church through human service programs.

These ministries face immense challenges. The role of the private and government sectors continue to change. The Affordable Care Act promises to extend health care to more Americans but also introduces great uncertainty. Withdrawal is not a missional church response. But neither is it faithful to get co-opted by government to do the work, with constraints that make bearing witness impossible.

As the broader church reclaims its engagement in health care, the institutions need the grounding in faith and hope represented in the life of the church. Together we strengthen the integration of word and deed in holistic witness.

# Do we love the world that God loves?

*And God put them in the garden to serve and preserve it.*—Genesis 2:15 paraphrased

The beginning of the growing season in northern Indiana was difficult last year. An extremely warm March led to early fruit tree blossoming. We watched the weather anxiously, wondering whether we dreaded more a killing frost that would devastate the harvest or prolonged unseasonable warmth. We got both, then an extended drought. The last significant rain of spring fell in early April. Nothing more came until mid-July. By dint of hard work we kept vegetable plants and berries alive through June and July, but the early blooming followed by a killing frost ensured that tree fruits and grapes were sparse. The many fruit farmers of lower Michigan had a terrible year; some, for the first time in their lives, had no harvest at all.

Last November, we watched the aftermath of superstorm Sandy on the North Atlantic coast. Climatologists told us the Atlantic ocean did not have time to cool down over the unseasonably warm winter. Hurricanes move north across the Atlantic, and the warm ocean contributed energy to the storm system, preventing it from dissipating as it crossed.

When I wonder about the truth of any global event I often turn to the church's feet on the ground. The stories coming from Mennonites who work around the world in hot war zones and where the cold wars of poverty and injustice take place often differ from what I see and hear from the *New York Times,* CNN, NPR and *USA Today* about these countries. When stories diverge, I know that the disinvested volunteer workers of our mission agencies and Mennonite Economic Development Associates have nothing to gain or hide by their involvement in these situations, and I trust their stories.

So it is with distress that I consider that my church does not have a story about climate change. Though many Mennonites care a lot about the health of the planet, we have not yet grappled as a body with our God-given responsibility to be stewards of the earth in light of climate change.

**Here is an irony:** On this issue I look outside the church for solidarity. While waiting for the necessary policy changes needed to address climate change, secular community and national organizations are making a difference, responding in a myriad of ways; through advocacy, raising awareness, reducing consumption, smart energy use, relocalization and rebuilding interdependence, they are tapping many creative ideas that can help us. Many people are working to build a sustainable future with creativity and ingenuity. I'm glad to collaborate with them, and they ignite my passion. But for the most part they are not people I can sing and pray with. They are not people with whom I can share my deepest hopes for the world.

I remember how important it was to me on Sept. 11, 2001, to gather with members of my community for prayer. Participation in the community at prayer gave me courage I did not have alone. Fear and dread gave way to hope and a sense of God's presence. When we are afraid, we need to feel God's presence through the care and support of those we love.

God so loved the world that he gave his son to save it. God gave us responsibility for creation and for the least ones. It is clear that something is up with the weather, and scientists who study climate are urging us to take immediate action to reduce CO$^2$ emissions. So does love of the world mean taking care that we do not lose half the remaining species on earth to extreme climate and weather changes? Do we believe that loving the world is our work, too?

**Mennonites would be so good** at addressing climate change: We are creative and have a history of hard work and service. We understand the elegance of simplicity and the strange arithmetic of collaboration. We have skills as scientists and inventors, technicians and artists, theologians and farmers, economists and homemakers and businessmen. To these practical gifts we can add our hope in God's love that ensures that the turning of the world is not altogether mechanical, in which grace often changes the game. However true it is that we live in a world of cause and effect, God also blesses our good efforts beyond our imagining.

Do we love the world that God loves well enough be instruments of its healing?

**Danile Martens** is a member of Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Ind.

God gave us responsibility for creation and for the least ones.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Convention participants cross into Mexico

## 156 Mennonites join Borderlinks delegations to learn about immigration issues.

Anna Groff

One group of Mennonites visits the border wall in Nogales, Ariz., on July 3 during Phoenix 2013.

During the first five days of July, 156 Mennonites traveled to the U.S-Mexico border through a Borderlinks educational delegation. Two-thirds of them went into Mexico.

Borderlinks is a Tucson, Ariz., organization that arranges delegations into the Arizona-Sonora region. The participants traveled together from the Phoenix Convention Center.

On July 3, one group witnessed the Operation Streamline process at a courthouse in Tucson, where they saw 70 individuals handcuffed, with ankles and waists heavily chained. Operation Streamline aims to process per day 100 undocumented entrants with misdemeanors and deport them.

That day, the judge called seven individuals to the bench at a time and sentenced them to between 30 and 175 days in a detention center. The majority that morning had re-entered the United States without permission, which is a felony.

**Joanna Harader, a participant from Lawrence, Kan.,** said that observing the "dehumanizing and tragic" process brought her to tears. Others in her group cried as well.

"They are criminalizing migration," she said. The lawyer she spoke with mentioned that allowing the U.S. government to "herd" these individuals through the legal process opens up the possibility for this kind of legal treatment in other situations not related to immigration.

Another group that day spoke with a retired couple who volunteers with Tucson Samaritans, a humanitarian organization that assists migrants in the desert. Legally, the volunteers can offer water, food and on-site medical assistance to migrants, but they are not allowed to give out maps, compasses or provide any kind of transportation.

The group that went into Mexico on July 3 first visited Grupos Beta, an agency funded by the Mexican government that offers basic services to migrants deported into Mexico. During the visit, they heard five men speak about their migration experiences—many of whom have spouses and children in the United States.

**One man described the dangers of border-crossing** in the desert. These include snakes and other animals, dehydration and rugged terrain. A cactus punctured the water bottle of his fellow migrant, who lost all his water. The others shared their water with him but were later discovered by a border control helicopter and captured. The group also heard that most migrants crossing the border in this way hire "coyotes" who often lie about the length of the trek to the United States. Their main intention is to profit off migrants, not assist their migration.

Another man said that after he was caught for re-entering, he was detained in a privately run detention center, where he cleaned and served food for an extremely low wage. He said the facility was profiting from his labor.

Others shared about the abuses they experienced in detention centers: not enough food or water, overcrowded conditions and disrespectful security.

That group also visited HEPAC, a Borderlinks sister organization and community center in Nogales, Sonora. Pastor Tito Bojórquez and volunteer Elias Suasnavart gave a tour of the facility. Suasnavart explained that the community needs child care and meal services, as most fathers migrated to the United States and most mothers work long, 10-hour days in the Nogales factories, so young children are often left alone at home.

HEPAC also provides adult classes, workshops and a computer lab. The school focuses mostly on technological training to equip students for factory work, Bojórquez said. "[The schools] are not giving people a place to think and reflect," he said.

When Bojórquez arrived in Nogales in 1992, the fence between Mexico and the United States in Nogales was a short chain-link fence that children tossed balls over.

Now it is a 14-foot steel wall built from reused landing strip material left over from the first Gulf War. He faults the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement for the division in the Nogales region, the destruction of ecology and the unfair treatment of factory laborers.—*Anna Groff*

# Ohio group meets with Sheriff Arpaio

## Two pastors offer an apology after learning of the hurt caused by the visit.

Everett J. Thomas

Roger Horst, left, is a youth group sponsor for Martins Mennonite Church in Orville, Ohio. Craig Strasbaugh is the youth pastor at Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

Two Ohio youth groups and their leaders, while attending Mennonite Church USA's July 1-5 convention in Phoenix, met with Maricopa County, Ariz., sheriff Joe Arpaio on July 2. Afterward, they were unaware that Arpaio's public relations staff had immediately posted five photos of the visit on the sheriff's Facebook page showing the smiling group gathered around the sheriff. The photo album quickly went viral, and convention staff began hearing complaints about the group's meeting with Arpaio and the hurt it was causing.

On July 5, the pastors of the two congregations offered an apology to moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht for the visit.

On May 24, a federal judge ruled that Arpaio, self-described as "America's toughest sheriff," was guilty of racial profiling Latinos through his department's immigration patrols. The court also ruled that Arpaio's deputies prolonged the detentions of people who were pulled over.

In January, leaders from the group asked for a room in the convention center where they could host the sheriff. Their request was denied. Executive Board staff member André Gingerich Stoner corresponded with one of the leaders.

"While we could not stop the youth group from making this visit," Gingerich Stoner said on July 17, "we discouraged it and counseled against it."

**The Mennonite group met with Arpaio** on July 2 to learn about immigration issues. Instead, they mostly talked about Arpaio's national notoriety and not much about immigration issues. Seven members of the contingent agreed to be interviewed on July 3 about the visit.

"We went to find out whether Sheriff Joe was everything we've heard," said Roger Horst, a youth group sponsor for Martins Mennonite Church in Orrville, Ohio. "We found out he's everything he's made out to be. But he still is a creation of God."

Horst initiated the meeting with Arpaio. Craig Strasbaugh, youth pastor at Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church, also joined the group with youth from his church.

"[Arpaio] gave a general story of his background," Strasbaugh said on July 3, "and the controversies that built up around him. ... There was a lot that felt like PR."

Strasbaugh said he "didn't grow so much as a person [through the conversation but learned] to have hard conversations with people I don't agree with."

Horst said he could not integrate what he hears from the church and what he hears from Arpaio.

"There's not much meeting point or integration," Horst said. "I came away feeling like ... a messenger [between] two people who ought to be talking to each other. The church would be well-served by talking with him. ... Sometimes the church views him with disdain in spite of asking us to accept all people."

**Within a day after Arpaio's staff** posted the photos of the Mennonite group, Executive Board staff members began getting complaints. Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking, said the group was oblivious to the hurt the visit and photos was causing Mennonite Hispanics who had elected not to attend the Phoenix convention.

Horst and Strasbaugh met with Glen Guyton on July 4 for further conversation. Guyton is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA.

"I did not get the sense they were 'pro Sheriff Joe,'" Guyton said. "As people of privilege, they were thinking they could simply meet with Sheriff Joe and that would be the end of it. Sheriff Joe is shrewd, cunning and obviously took advantage of the naivete of this group to further his personal and political agenda."

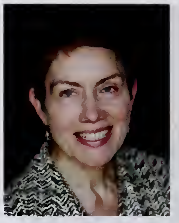
During the first delegate session on July 5, moderator-elect Elizabeth Soto Albrecht reported that she had talked to people on her trek to Phoenix who were hurt by the news of the youth group's visit. Immediately after the session, the pastors of the two congregations, Randy Murray of Martins Mennonite Church and Carl Wiebe of Kidron Mennonite Church, met with Soto Albrecht and read an apology.

"In anticipation of the immigration agenda at the Phoenix convention," they said, "the youth group leaders ... were encouraged to help their youth collect information on the topic. The meeting was for the purpose of information and not for affirmation. ... We are now profoundly aware of how this meeting was perceived. We express our deep regret and ask forgiveness for how this meeting has greatly offended many persons, especially our Hispanic brothers and sisters. We open ourselves up to further conversation as this may be helpful to those we have offended."—*Everett J. Thomas*

# Eight set for first terms

## Delegates at Phoenix convention elect moderator-elect, board members.

Members of churchwide boards of directors are chosen in one of three ways: elected by the delegate assembly, appointed by the Executive Board or coopted by the board on which they serve. On July 2 at the delegate session in Phoenix, seven people were elected to serve for a first term on the following boards: Executive Board, Everence, Mennonite Education Agency, Mennonite Mission Network and The Mennonite, Inc. The delegates also approve the selection of moderator-elect.

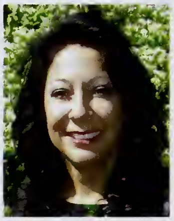


**Everence:** Karen Lehman, Furlong, Pa., is a member of Plains Mennonite Church. Karen is CEO of Rockhill Mennonite Community in Sellersville, Pa.

**Moderator-elect**: Patricia Shelly is professor of Bible and religion at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., and a core adjunct faculty member in Bible at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary—Great Plains, also in North Newton. She has completed eight years on the Executive Board.

**Mennonite Mission Network**: Barry Bartel, Golden, Colo., is a member of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church. Barry is an attorney who served in Haiti and Bolivia through Mennonite Central Committee.

**Executive Board**: Yvonne Diaz, Terlingua, Texas, is a member of Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio, Texas. She is the former executive director of Iglesia Menonita Hispana. She was nominated by the Iglesia Menonita Hispana to represent the group on the board.



**The Mennonite, Inc.**: Elaine Maust, Meridian, Miss., is co-pastor of Jubilee Mennonite Church and works for Maust Woodworking.

**Executive Board**: Joy Sutter, East Norristown, Pa., is a member of the Salford (Pa.) Mennonite Church. Joy is a hospital administrator.

**Executive Board**: Isaac Villegas, Durham, N.C., is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

**Mennonite Education Agency**: Judy Miller (no photo), Othello, Wash., is a member of Warden (Wash.) Mennonite Church. Judy is a retired professor.

The names of candidates for churchwide boards are nominated by the Leadership Discernment Committee. LDC members include Duncan Smith from Beaverton, Ore., and a member of Portland Mennonite Church, chair; Paula Brunk Kuhns, Colorado Springs, Colo., and a member of Beth-El Mennonite Church; Horace McMillon, Jackson, Miss., and a bivocational pastor serving Open Door Mennonite Church; Kim Vu Friesen, Minneapolis, and a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church; Dionicio Acosta, Lancaster, Pa., and a member of New Holland Spanish Mennonite Church; Edie Landis, Telford, Pa., and a member of Zion Mennonite Church; George Stoltzfus, Lititz, Pa., and a member of Landisville Mennonite Church; and Louise Wideman, Bluffton, Ohio, and associate pastor at First Mennonite Church of Bluffton.—*Everett Thomas*

# Conversation rooms again a convention feature

## Topics include climate change, sexuality, Israel/Palestine, racism, immigration.

Phoenix 2013, held July 1-5, included Conversation Rooms launched at Pittsburgh 2011. The process provides a deliberate, facilitated space where people are invited to engage in discussion on topics from differing perspectives.

The goal of these sessions was not to persuade others or make decisions but to listen deeply and speak from one's own perspective.

The rooms offered these topics: climate change, human sexuality, Israel and Palestine, racism, immigration, biblical interpretation and authority, and sexual orientation. Sessions ranged in size from around 20 to one packed room of 120, when many had to be turned away.

After we introduced the process and its purpose in the Conversation Room, we invited people to spend a few moments centering themselves, relaxing and reflecting in silence on certain questions. After establishing ground rules called a Respect Agreement, including a commitment to stay for the full 90 minutes, we invited one person to briefly share his or her perspective on the topic for the large group. Before others shared, another person volunteered to summarize what the person said. Once the person was confident that the person summarizing understood, another person shared, another summarized, and then a third pair did the same. Then the room continued that process in their groups of five, utilizing a talking piece to designate who was speaking and that others were listening. In small circles, once a person's perspective was summarized adequately by the person to their left, the talking piece was passed to that person to share. This continued for about 40 minutes. Then the entire group was invited to reflect on the experience.

Participants expressed appreciation for the process. Some acknowledged initial reluctance as the process was being described but then expressed affirmation in seeing how it actually worked. Over half the participants in the session on biblical interpretation said they heard a perspective they had never heard before. While only a dozen or so participants said they normally feel understood when they discuss sexual orientation, by show of hands it appeared that all 120 participants in that session felt they had been listened to and heard in their small group.—*Barry Bartel, an attorney in Denver, co-facilitated the Conversation Rooms.*

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# Parents describe sexual abuse of their daughter

## A local youth pastor abused a high school girl; she told her parents in college.

A local youth pastor sexually abused Michael and Angela's* daughter during her high school career. The abuser began grooming her (taking action to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child) during her freshman year. The perpetrator was not a member of their church.

Michael and Angela shared their horrific story at Phoenix 2013 in a seminar on childhood sexual abuse and gave advice on how to prevent abuse in communities and churches.

When their daughter went off to college, they said, they received a call from her one week later. She told them everything, and they believed her. That spring they prosecuted the youth pastor.

"Victims know that the likelihood of being believed is low," said Michael. "When society does talk about it, there are usually people saying it's made up or [the victim's] fault."

Perpetrators are "masters of deceit," Angela said. They manipulate their victim by isolating the victim from friends and family, brainwashing through statements like, "God has a special plan for us," and through threats like, "God wouldn't want you to ruin [my] ministry."

"In retrospect, we can see that the signs were there, but not the signs we thought to look for," said Michael. When they saw her acting withdrawn or anxious, "we thought she was just being a teenager," Angela said.

If you have an intuition that an adult is paying too much attention to your child, act on it, said Michael. Always trust your instincts. For example, neighbors saw the abuser jogging alone with a high school girl and thought it was strange but didn't know what they could do.

Angela recommended that parents monitor their children's cell phone use and urged that adults, such as youth leaders or sponsors, contact children through landlines to maintain openness. She also encouraged those in the seminar to rethink their ideas of mentorship in churches to avoid one-on-one time between adults and children.

Michael and Angela live in a small town and attend a Mennonite church. They emphasized that youth are not safer in small towns or church settings, as perpetrators gravitate to those areas. Youth are also taught to trust and respect elders, and, traditionally, men had more authority than women.

"[A child] should not have to wonder why a youth minister is being too nice to her," Michael said.

"The trauma affects every aspect of her life and ours," Angela said. "When you go through something like this, you find out who your true friends are."—*Anna Groff* **Not their real names*

### Misconceptions about child sexual abuse

**Mistake 1**: Sex offenders are usually strangers.

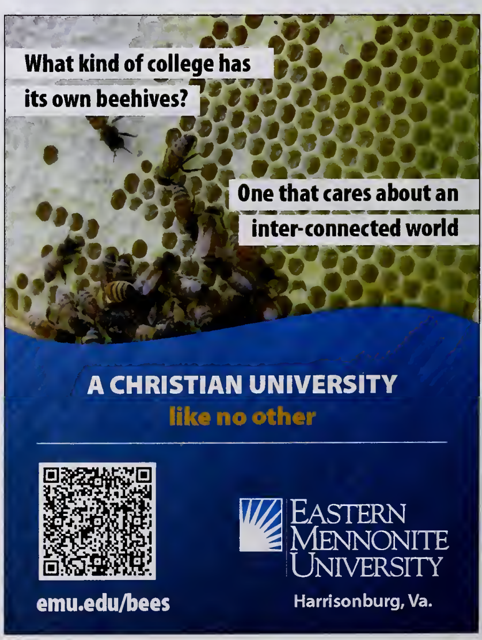
**Fact:** It is estimated that 85 percent of all reported cases of child sexual abuse involved an offender known to the child and the child's family.

**Mistake 2:** It's easy to spot a sex offender. They give off creepy vibes.

**Fact:** Sex offenders use strategies that allow them to gain access to children without raising red flags to others. They are skilled at hiding their behavior.—*Onewithcourage.org*

**Mistake 3:** It doesn't happen here (in my home, church, community).

**Fact:** Sexual abuse happens in the Mennonite church. One Quaker study showed rates of sexualized violence are higher than average in communities with a specific commitment to peace.—*Rita Nakashima Brock*



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# Bethel student performs to packed house

## Parents of slain activist Rachel Corrie attend Phoenix 2013 for performance

Melanie Zuercher

Renee Reimer, center, with her parents, Ray Reimer, left, and Rosie Epp, right, along with Rachel Corrie's parents, Craig and Cindy, who are flanking Renee.

About two-and-a-half years ago, Renee Reimer, Bethel College senior from Sioux Falls, S.D., came back from a journey through Israel and Palestine profoundly changed. Reimer was part of a January 2011 interterm group that included other Bethel students as well as local pastors and community members. Bethel College is in North Newton, Kan.

After returning to campus, Reimer's theater professor, Megan Upton-Tyner, handed her the script for "My Name is Rachel Corrie." Two years later, Reimer performed the play to an audience at Phoenix 2013.

"My Name is Rachel Corrie" is a one-woman play based on the journals and email messages of an American college student who, in early 2003, left her hometown of Olympia, Wash., to join the International Solidarity Movement in the Gaza Strip. On March 16, 2003, she died in Rafah after being run over by an armored bulldozer operated by the Israeli Defense Force.

This past February, two years after her visit to Israel-Palestine, Reimer performed "My Name is Rachel Corrie" as an independent study project at Bethel College, which, as it turned out, was only the beginning. One of Reimer's fellow travelers in 2011 had been Tom Harder, co-pastor of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan. Harder encouraged his congregation's peace committee to become a chapter of Friends of Sabeel, North American supporters of the international peace movement initiated by Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land.

Harder began communicating with Joy Lapp, former chair of Friends of Sabeel and a Mennonite who now teaches Bible and religion at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Lorraine Avenue's peace committee joined Friends of Sabeel, the first church group to do so. Harder and Lapp's conversations eventually expanded to include André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA, and Jason Boone, who directs Mennonite Church USA's Peace and Justice Support Network. With their support, Boone, Harder and Lapp launched a new organization, Mennonite Palestine-Israel Network, or Menno-PIN, at Phoenix 2013.

The launch event took place on July 4 at the convention, after Reimer had performed "My Name is Rachel Corrie" to a packed house that morning.

Lapp's connections brought two special audience members to Phoenix—Rachel's parents, Craig and Cindy Corrie, who still live in Olympia. The Corries started the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice after their daughter's death and have traveled widely, in the United States and across the world, speaking out for peace in Israel-Palestine and justice for Palestinians, as they believe Rachel would have wanted.—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

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# Sister Care crosses borders in Mexico

## Olga Piedrasanta and Ofelia García now serve as facilitators in Chihuahua.

Photo provided

Group using masks: In small groups, participants responded to the questions, What is the mask that I wear, and what do I hide behind it? Then, one by one, each woman removed her mask, and the group expressed their affirmation to her.

Five months had passed since the assassination of Diana Sandova's pastor, Josefina (Chepina) Rempening Diaz, in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico. But Diana's insecurity remained. Not until attending a workshop called Cuidándonos entre mujeres (Sister Care) did she experience release. The Sister Care workshop series in Latin America is a joint project of the Movement of Latin American Anabaptist Women Theologians (MTAL) and Mennonite Women USA, with support from additional churches and agencies. At each location of the traveling workshop, participants' experiences give a particular focus on the sessions.

On May 24-26 in Chihuahua, which is in northern Mexico, the sessions about losses touched the women deeply, many said. They said they felt both the loss of a pastor and the loss of their sense of security. The women came from various conferences and cultures, including Hispanic, Germanic and the indigenous Tarahumara. They found sisterly similarities and mutual support.

Rosy Guillen, mission worker in Chihuahua, Mexico, did a dramatization of the Samaritan woman with an emphasis on how Jesus helps women remove their masks. In groups, participants responded to the questions, What is the mask that I wear, and what do I hide behind it? Then, one by one, each woman removed her mask and was affirmed by the group. Rosario García was thankful both for the helpful exercise and for God's transformative power.

In February 2013, two of the coordinators, Olga Piedrasanta of Guatemala and Ofelia García of Mexico, participated in the first Latin American workshop in Guatemala led by Sister Care presenters Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keener. Following their participation in the Sister Care seminar, Keener and Heggen provided individualized training for Piedrasanta and García to prepare them to serve as facilitators in Chihuahua. Rebeca González of Mexico City, who coordinates the MTAL day of prayer, also attended this seminar to prepare to share the workshop with other Mexican women. Women who participated in Chihuahua are leaders in their churches or conventions and anticipate reproducing the workshop. Sonia Bojórquez de Dyck said, "I thank God for MTAL. This teaching is deep, and I'm glad that it has reached us. Extending the workshop will be a first step."—*Linda Shelly of Mennonite Mission Network*

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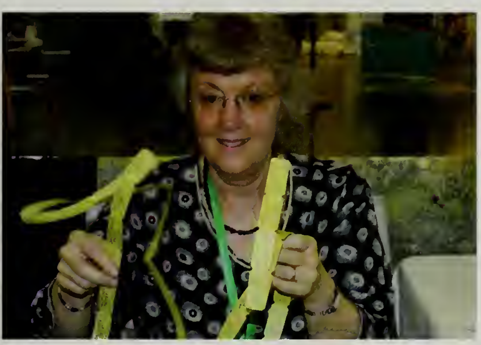
# Quilt raffle will fund at least one scholarship

## Mennonite Women USA event raised more than $800 at Phoenix convention.

Photo provided

On July 5, Lauralee Kauffman (right), from Iowa City, Iowa, won a quilt raffled off by Mennonite Women USA. The quilt was made by the board's secretary, Maria Harnish (left) as a fund-raiser.



Everett J. Thomas

Rhoda Keener, Mennonite Women USA's co-director, from Shippensburg, Pa., bought lots of tickets in a quilt raffle during the organization's exhibit at the Phoenix 2013 convention.

A Mennonite Women USA raffle resulted in Lauralee Kauffman, Iowa City, Iowa, winning a T-shirt quilt during the Phoenix 2013 convention July 1-5. More than $800 worth of tickets were purchased by women and men who visited the Mennonite Women USA booth during the Phoenix 2013 convention.

Kauffman, a self-professed collector of quilts and a quilter in her own right, said she is dreaming of creative ways to display the quilt in her own church, East Union Mennonite of Kalona, Iowa, as well as other churches in her community.

The quilt was assembled by Marie Harnish, Indianapolis. Harnish was inspired to create the quilt in response to a discussion at the Mennonite Women USA board meeting in 2012. Harnish serves as the secretary on the Mennonite Women USA board of directors.

What is a Mennonite woman? was the question.

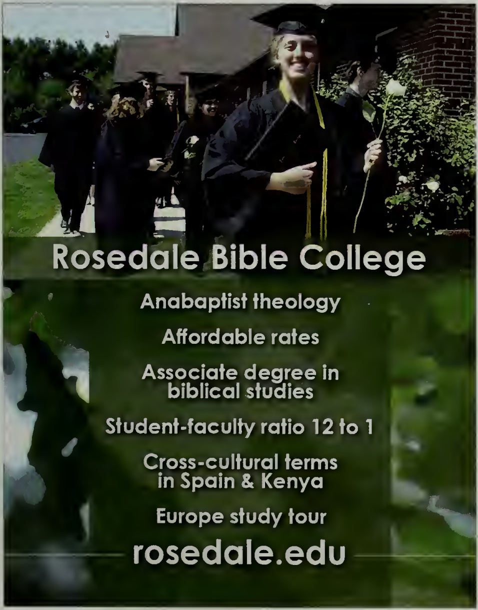
The answers are multifaceted.

Harnish's vision was further inspired by searching for T-shirts at local thrift stores, where she found many T-shirts with images of women, Scripture and slogans by and about women.

**From the colorful backing fabric**, which was donated by Fanni Birky of Goshen, Ind., to each T-shirt, there is significance in all aspects of the quilt.

The proceeds from the quilt will go toward the various ministries of Mennonite Women USA, including scholarships for women studying theology around the world, Sister Care seminars, locally and internationally, *Timbrel* magazine and the annual Bible study guide.

Co-director Rhoda Keener said that the income from the raffle tickets will fund at least one scholarship for theological study.—*Ruth Guengerich for Mennonite Women USA*



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# Delivering water to parched prisoners

## Muteba left occult rituals, amulets and returned to his church; now he's a pastor.

Jean-Richard Muteba Wa Mbuyi, a Mennonite pastor in Democratic Republic of Congo, spends a lot of time ministering inside La Prison Centrale de Mbuji Mayi. So one day in March, while walking by the prison, strains of a song gripped his attention.

"We are dying of thirst. No water for days," wove through the razor-wire overhead.

Muteba, ordained in July 2012 during the 50th anniversary celebration of his denomination Communauté Evangéligque Mennonite au Congo (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo), laid aside all other responsibilities and entered the prison gates. Since the guards knew him well, Muteba was granted access to the rooms where approximately 800 people were held, waiting for their trial dates.

**In Congo, people accused of a crime are guilty** until proven innocent. They can wait several years for a judge to review their cases. During this time, prisoners struggle to survive, often packed by the hundreds into small concrete-block rooms. Though their families are expected to provide food for them, the prison normally assures enough water to sustain life—except for the week preceding the desperate song in March when the water shortage in the city was more severe than usual.

Muteba carried the news of the thirsty prisoners to the Sangilayi Evangelical Mennonite Church, where he is part of the pastoral team. The church leaders decided to disburse some of the funds that Henry De Leeuw, a surgeon and member of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., gives for prison ministry. De Leeuw began to share in this way when he visited Mbuji Mayi three years ago.

This city of 3 million inhabitants has no piped water. The delivery system consists of men and boys going to streams with as many as six 50-gallon jugs strapped to their bicycles. Muteba paid for several loads of water to be taken to the prison with some of these prison ministry funds.

**Muteba visits the prison weekly.** He hears from people who have been locked up for years on false charges and others who are starving because they have no family members in Mbuji Mayi to bring them food. Some people have been acquitted in a long-awaited trial but remain in prison because they have no money for the exit fee.

Muteba is part of the congregational committee that prepares a monthly meal for all of the prison occupants. Sometimes prison ministry funds also pay the exit fee. Many of the prisoners join the Sangilayi church when they are freed. One of them, Daniel Kasongo, is now part of the pastoral team.

Trisha Handrich

Benjamin Mubenga Wa Kabanga, president of Communauté Evangélique Mennonite au Congo (Mennonite Evangelical Community of Congo), blesses Jean-Richard Muteba Wa Mbuyi during his ordination ceremony in July 2012.

Being Jesus' hands and feet among captives was not always the path Muteba saw for himself. Though he was born into the Mennonite church, Muteba rebelled against religion in his youth. He believed violence was his best means of survival, envisioning a military career and working toward his black belt in karate.

"I had no intention of serving God in my life," Muteba said. "I thought having many protective amulets would assure success and protect me from all danger."

He purchased amulets to make himself invincible and to protect his wife, Adel Kanjinga, and their six children. He performed rituals that he now says were "hard and ridiculous." However, despite his heroic efforts in the occult domain, his oldest son died, and his other children were frequently ill.

In 1990, at age 20, Muteba realized the dark powers were not providing the good life he desired and decided to return to the church of his childhood.

"I felt a call from God," Muteba said. "When I followed the ways of this world, I didn't have a single happiness. Today, I am a very happy man."

Muteba said his journey is a source of hope for the prisoners he visits, and rarely does Muteba enter the prison without hearing thanks for the water his church provided when the prisoners were desperately thirsty, water that increases the fruitfulness of the gospel seeds he plants.

Mennonite Mission Network partners with the three Mennonite denominations in Congo, Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and Mennonite Church Canada through the Partnership Council in Congo.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Lancaster, Pa., Ethiopians thank EMM missionaries

## 65 former missionaries and children represent more than 500 combined years.

Mark R. Wenger

Fikre Bekele, representing the congregation of Light of the World Evangelical Church in Rohrerstown, Pa., greets Esther Becker, who served with EMM as a teacher in Ethiopia from 1954 to 1990.

The happy sounds of ililtas—or joy cries—and songs in Amharic filled the Evangelical Ethiopian Church of Lancaster (EECL), Pa., during a celebration held June 16 to honor Eastern Mennonite Missions workers who shared the good news of Jesus many years ago in Ethiopia.

Demeke W. Getahun, pastor of EECL, said, "We are the fruit of their labors. The missionaries who came to Ethiopia impacted thousands of lives. The Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) was established through their service."

Sixty-five former missionaries and their children, who represented more than 500 combined years of mission work, attended the missionary appreciation event.

**MKC began in the 1950s with the first** Mennonite church in Ethiopia. When MKC had to go underground (1982-1991) during the Marxist reign, it grew tenfold. Today MKC has more than 500 churches with a membership of more than 350,000.

Stories and testimonies were shared by three former missionaries: Chester Wenger, Sharon Kraybill, and Paul Gingrich. Pastor Demeke, Gemechu Gebre (representing New Life Ethiopian Church of Lancaster), and Fikre Bekele (representing Light of the World Evangelical Church in Rohrerstown) gave short speeches.

Pastor Demeke said he and his congregation had been thinking of having such a day for a long time. EECL is a congregation of approximately 60-70 people. It is the oldest church in the area that worships in Amharic.—*Linda Moffett of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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# Why military veterans become pacifists

## Julie Putnam Hart draws conclusions after interviewing 115 former soldiers.

When I joined the peace community in the 1980s and the Mennonite Church in the 1990s, I was exposed to miraculous stories of transformation from prowar soldiers to antiwar veterans. As a professor and social-psychologist who studies human behavior in groups, I sought to understand the dynamics of this dramatic transformation. From 2005 to 2009, I interviewed 115 former military personnel about their childhoods, their military experiences, the period of change in their thinking and where they stand today politically, religiously and socially. What I discovered was that this transformation was not just a simple attitude change about issues of peace and war but a more holistic change of one's core identity. Christians may call this a rebirth, a conversion experience or metanoia—a Greek word meaning a change of heart and mind much like the Apostle Paul experienced on the road to Damascus.

Among the veterans interviewed, I found four primary catalysts or life experiences that challenged the veterans' conceptions of war, the enemy, the United States or the military. These conceptions undergirded their identities as patriotic prowar Americans or as good Christians fighting evil around the world. The four dominant experiences or catalysts are combat, betrayal, religious conviction and education. In this article, I will describe these catalysts, share examples of veterans' stories from each catalyst group and then draw some conclusions important to the antiwar and pacifist Christian communities.

Dick Davis (left) and Lee Lever (right) were among the military veterans interviewed for this project.

**My 115 interviewees** were solicited from an announcement on the following organizations' websites: Veterans for Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Iraq Veterans against the War. In addition, I contacted a list of veterans who were members of a Mennonite church. Subjects were selected based on their accounts of changing perspectives on war over the life course. Each phone interview lasted from one to three hours and included a set of 17 questions. Those I interviewed ranged in age from 22 to 82 and had served in wars from World War II to Iraq II. The majority are male Vietnam War veterans.

The actual attitude of the subject on war was first determined with an open-ended question about what they believed at age 18 about the appropriate use of war. This was followed by what they believe today. I then read an eight-point scale from militaristic to pacifistic, and the subject identified the points on the scale that they were closest to at age 18 and currently. This information informed the initial attitude or identity for each subject and the current attitude or identity related to war. It also determined the degree of attitude change for each subject. For example, a subject may have identified #1, "It is appropriate for the nation/state to respond to offense or injustice anywhere in the world in any way it sees fit," as his or her belief about the appropriate use of war at age 18. If his or her belief about war today was identified as #7, "Neither the Christian nor the person of conscience nor the nation/state should engage in war because all human life is sacred," or #8, "I believe that there are nonviolent means to resolve conflict peacefully without recourse to war," their attitude change would be scored as significant on the scale.

I found that all participants in the study verbalized some change in their attitude regarding peace and war over time; no one remained stagnant. For the vast majority, the change was dramatic from a militaristic perspective with few limits on the use of war to a belief either in strict restrictions on the use of war (just war theory) or some level of pacifism based either on humanitarian or religious grounds. The majority of participants shared a number of additional characteristics suggesting that this was a more holistic change of identity.

First, they primarily moved to the left politically. The participants with the broadest change in thinking also changed jobs or careers, choosing an area that demonstrated their new commitments and worldview. For some this meant going to seminary or law school. For others, this was demonstrated by entering the helping professions or teaching. Others spent their spare time in social activism or healing work. These changes led to a sense of peace, doing the right thing or feeling whole and healthy in a way they had not previously. Many of the participants, when asked if there were other changes in their lives as a result of their peace/war shift, mentioned increased political awareness and a decline in prejudice against homosexuals and other disenfranchised groups. Many said their faith changed when they experienced the horror of combat. A 30-year-old Navy veteran saw significant changes: *My friends all changed. I lost my conservative evangelical friends. Politically, I identify as a Democrat now. My idea of good public policy is different. ... I have more* *compassion and faith. I am an environmentalist. My faith has moved to be more liberal and peace and justice oriented. I am more into process-oriented dialogue. I don't disrespect the military today, but I don't consider it an asset.* #115

**Combat as a catalyst for identity change**: The first catalyst, "combat," represents veterans that frame the experience of combat and war as the most pivotal component of their changing stance on war. This is the largest group of veterans (37 percent). When placed in war, the reality of combat, of the enemy or of their comrades was so different from their expectation that upon reflection they felt wrong, confused, ashamed or unable to live with themselves and their actions during combat. Participants in this category often described the horror of war as being beyond description. One veteran was shocked by the valor of the enemy and the contrast in firepower between the United States and the North Vietnamese in 1967. He experienced shame due to the behavior of his comrades in the fight. He clearly expected the United States was in Vietnam to protect women and children and discovered that his fellow soldiers were not: *The most important event was just seeing real war. We walked endlessly and waited for someone to shoot us. Our unit started out with 160 men and got down to 60. ... There is no morality in war. We didn't even help orphans. ... The first event was when we got hit by our own artillery, and two guys were killed. The medics would pop morphine pills in the mouths of the wounded. I tried to carry one guy back for help, and he died. It's so bad (combat), you can't imagine how bad it really is. I can't explain it. ...* #135

Austin Kocher (left) and Garland Robinson (right) were among the military veterans interviewed for this project.

**Betrayal as a catalyst for change**: The second largest group (23 percent) is termed "betrayal." The source of identity conflict for this group began with a profound sense of betrayal by the U.S. government, U.S. military or a particular U.S. leader. In many cases, the foundation of the existing belief system was based on the moral superiority of the U.S. government, U.S. leaders' high ethical standards and the honesty of the U.S. military and necessity of U.S. intervention around the world. When these views were challenged by experience or trusted new information, the veteran sought a different way to understand historical events, the United States and issues of peace and war. This group differed from the other catalyst groups as they expressed their sense of betrayal emotionally and viscerally—as if the betrayal had caused a physical assault on their body, mind or spirit. It seemed to shake their belief in U.S. morality. As their belief system was challenged, their identity as a "patriotic American" or "proud veteran" also had to shift.

This Army veteran served in the United States but felt shocked after learning through Army friends and texts about U.S. military involvement around the world:

*I enlisted in the Army from 1963-66 and served in the U.S. I was a damn good soldier but wanted out after three years. I worked and then went to college. Letters from my buddies who stayed in after 1966 and went to Vietnam began to change my mind. ... They said everyone in Vietnam hates the U.S. ... I began to study the historical situation of the region, and I trusted the literature as it jived with what my buddies said from Vietnam. I was shocked, angry and confused to learn about the U.S. oppression. ... I felt like I was psychologically raped (to learn the truth). This shook me to my bones.* #71

**Religious conviction as a catalyst for change**: A third largest catalyst group is termed "Religious Conviction" (21 percent). Members of this group understand their change as occurring only after being introduced to religious ideas or spiritual experiences that caused them to question previous conceptions of killing in war and the possibilities of nonviolent social change and/or responses to injustice. In contrast to the combat and betrayal groups, religious conviction veterans identify religious intellectual enlightenment as a source of identity conflict. These experiences from seminary to college to church, exposed them to alternative conceptions of God, war, Christianity and/or ethics of human dignity that led them to question the soldier identity. One soldier notes: *In 1979, after graduating from seminary, I joined the Army and was put in chaplaincy training. In 1982, my Home Mission Board called me for active duty in the Army as a Chaplain. I was assigned to a battalion with 1,000-1,500 soldiers. ... It was here that I learned how violent the Army could be. ... later I was selected to go to study more to be a staff officer. We studied kill ratios and a cold calculated approach to war. I decided afterward that I wasn't going to study war anymore. Then I was selected to be an instructor at the chaplain's school ... while studying pastoral psychology. I took a course on Catholic moral theology, and Professor Stanley Hauerwas encouraged me to study just war theory and John Howard Yoder's* The Politics of Jesus. *At the end of my major paper for the course, I was a pacifist. I decided it was crazy for Christians to be in the Army, but as a chaplain, I could do it. ... One of my co-workers said to me one day, ... you are a conscientious objector, and you don't even know it. I took the C.O. regulations home with me that weekend, filled out the papers and turned them in Monday. Rather than grant me the C.O. discharge, they honorably discharged me after 10 years of active duty.* #12

**Education as a catalyst for change**: The fourth and final catalyst group is termed "Education." These veterans share the experience of becoming more critical in their thinking about their military experience and the world. Through higher education or readings critical of a war or the United States, this group adopts a new personal identity of "critical thinker" and in this identity begins to question previous assumptions about the United States and the world.

In order to tolerate or even enjoy the military experience, it is easier to set aside other important identities, as they are not verified by those in the military. For example, the student identity often includes thinking critically and creatively, questioning theory and research, basing one's truth on scientific or carefully researched data, taking initiative and participating in respectful dialogue with authority figures. These are different standards from the military. In order to excel in the university setting, new norms and identities become important and the commitments of the individual to the soldier identity may change. This experience of higher education was the catalyst for 19 percent of the subjects in the study. One veteran explains:

*My first three years in the Air Force (1963-66), I didn't consider the antiwar arguments (Vietnam) and went along with the President. I liked the macho culture and the espri de corps and thought that I should go to Vietnam to prove my manhood. When I left Vietnam, I immediately entered an MBA program and got married and started college coaching. It wasn't wise because I didn't take time to think about the war for 15-20 years. ... In 1980, I met and married my current wife, and we moved and became involved in our local community. In 1985, I began to read Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, and this led to others. I also began involvement with Veterans for Peace.* #112

We must partner with groups like Veterans for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

**There are three main conclusions** that can be drawn from this research. First, complex identity change is a holistic process that tends to affect many levels of identity, creates changes in group affiliations and affects the day-to-day activities of individuals. Second, once an individual experiences distress, they attempt to reduce that stress. Access to individuals, texts, websites, groups and belief systems that provide alternative perspectives are important to constructing new identities. Third, these changes in role and identity, once stabilized, lead to feelings of wholeness, peace and confidence.

The church, and specifically the peace church tradition, has an important role to play with veterans who are experiencing identity conflict or strain, especially combat vets with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). First, the church has and should continue to study and offer support to veterans who are in distress regarding their previous prowar identity. This support may be through easily accessible websites geared to veterans, veterans support groups near military bases, films interviewing antiwar veterans, texts that offer a coherent antiwar perspective without demonizing veterans and new scriptural interpretations on violence and war.

Second, the church must witness to the alternatives to war and violence that involve positive actions for peace and social justice. This is demonstrated in the church's practice and involvement in trainings for restorative justice, conflict transformation, community organizing, nonviolent social change, human rights advocacy, anti-oppression, peace education in schools and churches as well as groups such as Christian Peacemaker Teams. The work of counter-recruiting, talking with young men and women about alternatives to the military is very important.

Third, the church must provide a nonjudgmental and compassionate outreach to veterans, their families and friends. Many are in turmoil. Suicide among veterans has reached epidemic proportions due to PTSD. Pacifists have much in common with many veterans. We share a love of country and an appreciation for our many freedoms and rights. We also share a desire to make the world a better place, where justice and peace prevail. We simply believe in different means of accomplishing these goals. We can reach out to these veterans as our neighbors, fellow college students and co-workers. We can walk with them, listen to their stories and provide support. One Christian group providing financial support to veterans who have fallen through the cracks is Centurions Guild (www.centurionsguild.org). It provides funding for medical and emotional support when the Veterans Administration is not able to help.

This outreach will be most effective through our commitment to spiritual practices of prayer, study, fasting and surrender to God. These practices open us to God so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world. This increases the chance that our outreach is peaceful, nondefensive, compassionate and well-informed.

Finally, we must partner with groups like Veterans for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Vietnam Veterans Against the War. These groups hold tremendous legitimacy with the public that Christian pacifists lack in opposing war and promoting peaceful alternatives to war. They sponsor public events, advocate for legislative change and hold veteran support groups and educational conferences. We can learn much from these veterans, support their projects financially and share our faith—a faith that many veterans abandoned in their experience of war.—*Julie Putnam Hart is an associate professor of sociology and peace and justice at Ohio Dominican University in Columbus, Ohio. Hart volunteers with Christian Peacemaker Teams each summer, doing human rights work in Israel/Palestine and currently Colombia.*

## CALENDAR

Nov. 7-10; ***Cultivating Solutions: Harvesting Hope*, Mennonite Economic Development Associates**' (MEDA's) annual convention, Wichita, Kan. Go to www.medaconvention.org or call 800-665-7026.

**Eighth Street Mennonite Church**, Goshen, Ind., invites friends and former attendees to help celebrate its ***centennial year*** throughout 2013. *A Body That Lives* serves as a theme for the stories of people with vision and courage who influenced and guided the church's ministry through its 100 years to the present time. Centennial themes began in February, will culminate during August and end in November with worship and a congregational meal. Aug. 2, 5-9 p.m.: *A Celebration of Art and Visual Creativity.* Aug. 9, 7 p.m.: *Stories Past and Present.* Aug. 10, 7 p.m.: *Celebration of Music.* Please check the website at www.8thstmennonite.org for additional information.

***48th annual Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale***, Aug. 2 and 3. New indoor location: Buckeye Event Center, Dalton, Ohio. Auction items can be previewed online about one month prior to the sale at www.OhioMCCReliefSale.org. Brochures, registration information, etc., are also available online. Admission and parking are free. Handicap parking and wheelchairs are available.

## WORKERS

**Horst, Carmen**, was ordained as associate pastor at James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 23.

**Kanagy, Audrey**, was ordained as associate pastor at Living Light Mennonite Church, Washington Boro, Pa., on June 2.

**Krebs, Matthew**, was licensed as lead pastor at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa., on June 16.

**Moore, Kenneth**, was ordained as pastor at Benders Mennonite Church, Pen Argyl, Pa., on June 23.

**Weaver, Darrel**, was licensed for church development in Germany at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on June 16.

## OBITUARIES

**Alderfer, Abram Hagey**, 90, Telford, Pa., died June 5. Spouse: Marian Kerr Alderfer. Parents: Mahlon D. and Martha Hagey Alderfer. Child: Paul; two grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: June 9 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

**Amstutz, Frances Elizabeth Schroeder**, 94, Bloomfield, Iowa, died June 4. Spouse: John Edward Amstutz. Parents: Herman and Elise Wickersheim Schroeder. Children: Karen Spurgeon, Dean, Keith; nine grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 7 at Pulaski Mennonite Church, Rural Pulaski, Iowa.

**Basinger, Lola May Schertz**, 96, Bluffton, Ohio, died March 3. Spouse: Lowell Eugene Basinger (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Matilda Stalter Schertz. Children: Doug, Deborah Stechschulte, Jerome; five grandchildren; one grandchild. Funeral: March 8 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Birkey, Ruby Belle Oyer**, 93, Rantoul, Ill., died June 16. Spouse: Harlan Birkey (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Bertha Zimmerman Oyer. Children: Joy Marie Birkey, Joe. Funeral: June 16 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

**Boshart, Don Wyse**, 78, Wayland, Iowa, died June 22, of cancer. Spouse: Eldora Marie Roth Boshart. Parents: Elon Martin and Eldora Mae Wyse Boshart. Children: Mark, Jan Shelman; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

**Delp, Dale N.**, 72, Harleysville, Pa., died June 18. Spouse: Arlene Landis Delp. Parents: Norman and Hannah Nyce Delp. Children: Michael, Todd; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 22 at Towamencin Mennonite Church, Kulpsville, Pa.

**Detweiler, Pearl Swartley**, 85, Harleysville, Pa., died May 27. Spouse: Wilmer Benner Detweiler. Parents: Jacob D. and Lizzie Swartley Detweiler. Children: Carolyn Hallman, Wilmer, David, Faith Ann Detweiler; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 31 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

**Diener, Menno**, 93, Akron, Pa., died June 7. Spouse: Savilla Taylor Diener (deceased). Parents: Edward and Mary Buckwalter Diener. Children: Grace Tyson, Elaine Taylor, Nevin, Arlin. Funeral: June 13 at Akron Mennonite Church.

**Ediger, Anna R. Pauls**, 91, Inman, Kan., died June 15. Spouse: Henry M. Ediger (deceased). Parents: J.T. and Anna Regehr Pauls. Children: Lois Taylor, Allen, Paul; three grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 19 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**Enns, Rachel Martha Nickel**, 93, Inman, Kan., died March 8. Spouse: John F. Enns (deceased). Parents: Willia B. and Susie Schmidt Nickel. Children: Irvin, Velma Busenitz, Marilyn Smith; 12 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 12 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite.* Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Fisher, Ruth Amelia**, 98, Kalona, Iowa, died May 27. Parents: Daniel J. and Ida Miller Fisher. Funeral: June 1 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

**Franz, Bernice Pearl Borthwick**, 90, Reedley, Calif., died June 1. Spouse: Earl Franz (deceased). Spouse: Dick Borthwick (deceased). Funeral: June 6 at Smith Mountain Cemetery, Dinuba, Calif.

**Froese, Doris Jan Thiesen**, 76, Inman, Kan., died Feb. 15. Spouse: Waldo C. Froese (deceased). Parents: Jacob S. and Marie Dirksen Thiesen. Children: Jay, Ray, Larry, Gary, Dale, Bill; 15 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 18 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**Harder, Irma Fast**, 95, Hesston, Kan., passed away on May 27 at Schowalter Villa Health Care in Hesston. Irma was born on May 20, 1918, to Katherine Schultz Janzen Fast and John N. Fast in Mountain Lake, Minn. She was a member of the Bethel Mennonite Church. Irma graduated from Mt. Lake High school in 1936, and then attended the University of Minnesota, studying home economics and business. She worked for Northwestern Bell before she returned to Mt. Lake to marry Clarence W. Harder on Aug. 7, 1949. After he passed away suddenly in 1962, Irma completed the building of a Standard Oil Station, which was to be the family business. Soon after she began as the Public Librarian, and eventually led the way for a new library building to be constructed. She was also instrumental in developing the Heritage Village Museum as a way of preserving buildings, artifacts, and history for future generations. Irma served her community and church in a variety of ways: historian, church librarian, quilter, gardener, and good neighbor. Irma was known for her ready smile and gracious presence and she will be deeply missed. Preceding her in death were her parents, husband Clarence, infant daughter Deborah, sisters Leone Fast and Kay Johnson. Cherishing her memory are her daughters Becky Harder (Doug) of Monument, Colo., Marlene Harder Bogard (Mike) of Newton, Kan.; four grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. A Celebration of Life service was held at the Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston, on June 22.

**Gingrich, Leonard G.**, 89, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died May 24. Spouse: Doris Burkhart Gingrich (deceased). Parents: Amos and Susanna Gingrich Gingrich. Children: Gary, Marlin, Wendy Gingrich, Kevin; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 31 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

**Hess, Martha C. Hoffer**, 89, Terre Hill, Pa., died June 10. Spouse: Robert Buckwalter Hess (deceased), Parents: Irwin S. and Floy S. Crouthamel Hoffer. Children: Susan A. Huest, Martha A. Kelley, Robert B., Jr., Thomas I., Rebecca F. Good, Philip D.; 14 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 15 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

**Jantzi, Violet Mae Zehr**, 89, Medina, N.Y., died May 22. Spouse: Marvin Kennel Jantzi. Parents: John and Susan Gascho Zehr. Children: Dawn Jantzi, Gail Brunk, Larry, Don, Beryl, Kerry; 10 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 9 in Medina.

**Kauffman, John Kurtz**, 80, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 10. Spouse: Marie Wenger Kauffman. Parents: John Esch Kauffman and Malinda Kurtz Kauffman. Children: Jill Misto, Kent; five grandchildren. Funeral: May 15 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

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**Kehler, Menno**, 73, Altona, Manitoba, died June 12. Spouse: Anne Kehler. Parents: Martin and Maria Kehler. Children: Tim, Dan, Leigh-Anne; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 17 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Leatherman, Della M. Meyers**, 83, Perkasie, Pa., died June 15. Spouse: Richard D. Leatherman (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Edna Meyers. Child: Dale R.; three grandchildren. Funeral: June 21 at Deep Run East Mennonite Church, Perkasie.

**Litwiller, Fred**, 72, Goshen, Ind., died June 6. Spouse: Faye Newcomer Litwiller. Parents: Oliver and Vera Slabaugh Litwiller. Children: Vonda, Laura, Matt; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 10 College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Nafziger, Laura Erb**, 98, Stratford, Ontario, died May 10. Spouse: Harvey Nafziger (deceased). Parents: Daniel S. and Nancy Gerber Erb. Children: Rae, Nancy Ellen Nafziger, Ronald, Linda Nafziger; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 16 at Maple View Mennonite Church, Wellesley, Ontario.

**Peachey, Harvey L.**, 81, Belleville, Pa., died June 2. Spouse: M. Delores Wilson Peachey. Parents: Harvey L., Sr., and Anna Hartzler Peachey. Children: Barry L., Randal L., Gregg A., H. Willis; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 5 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

**Ramseyer, Lois Kathryn Hecker**, 88, Bloomfield, Iowa, died June 16. Spouse: Charles Samuel Ramseyer (deceased). Parents: Nicholas Reason and Hazel Vera Worley Hecker. Children: Larry, Dennis, Paul; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 19 at Pulaski Mennonite Church, Rural Pulaski, Iowa.

**Rempel, Edith Helmer**, 92, Hillsboro, Kan., died June 9. Spouse: Elmer Rempel (deceased). Child: Courtney; three grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Memorial service: June 18 at Greeley Senior Center, Greeley, Colo.

**Roggie, Verna Lehman**, 81, Lowville, N.Y., died April 27. Spouse: Howard Roggie (deceased). Parents: Erwin Z. and Lena H. Zehr Lehman. Children: Wayne, Benjamin, Glenn, Bradley, Joan Lehman, Judy Wood; 17 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 30 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

**Roth, Phyllis Aschliman**, 93, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 6, of lung cancer. Parents: Cletus and Elizabeth Wyse Aschliman. Children: Daryl, Charlene May, Paul, Rod, Larry, Joyce Schaffner; 19 grandchildren; 37 great-grandchildren; six great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 10 at Fairlawn Nursing Home Chapel, Archbold.

**Schmucker, Clifford**, 58, Lebanon, Ohio, died May 26, of injuries sustained in a skydiving accident. Companion: Karen Dean. Parents: Earl and Dorothy Yoder Schmucker. Children: Nathan, Adam. Funeral: June 1 at Beech Mennonite Church, Lousiville, Ohio.

**Smith, Arlene Mabel Lantz**, 81, Morenci, Mich., died Jan. 2, of cancer. Spouse: James Smith. Parents: Lewis and Alice Lantz. Children: Michael, Linda Teske, James, Jr.; 10 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 5 at Inlet Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**Strite, Ethel Showalter**, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 15. Spouse: Lewis E. Strite (deceased). Parents: D.H. and Flora Mae Grove Showalter. Children: L. Gerald, Elaine Strite Viste, Carmen Strite Miller; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

**Tyson, Jeanette Moyer**, 93, Silverdale, Pa., died May 28. Spouse: Millard M. Tyson. Parents: Theodore and Lucy Moyer Moyer. Children: Donna Greene, Mary Lou Davenport, Cynthia Ann Hause; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Rockhill Mennonite Community Chapel, Sellersville, Pa.

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## RESOURCES

**Blessings of the Burden: Reflections and Lessons in Helping the Homeless** by Alan R. Burt (Eerdmans, 2013, $26) covers Burt's own journey from apathy to advocacy, an interview with a formerly homeless man who is now the director of an organization that fights homelessness in Cape Cod, Burt's analysis of the 12 main reasons why homelessness is such a massive problem in America and an example of how one community developed an innovative and cost-effective approach to helping the homeless among them.

**Christianophobia: A Faith Under Attack** by Rupert Shortt (Eerdmans, 2013, $26) investigates the shocking treatment of Christians on several continents and exposes the extent of official collusion. Shortt demonstrates how belief is the canary in the mine for freedom in general.

**Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ** by Eugene H. Peterson (Eerdmans, 2013, $17) is the fifth and final book in Peterson's series of "conversations" in spiritual theology. He brings the voice of Scripture—especially Paul's letter to the Ephesians—and the voice of the contemporary Christian congregation together to unpack what it means to fully grow up "to the stature of Christ."

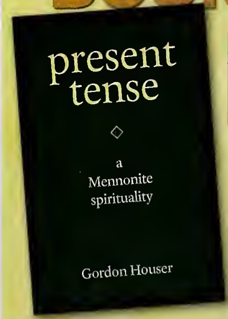
**The Amish** by Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner and Steven M. Nolt (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $29.95) is the companion book to the American Experience documentary on PBS. It is the first comprehensive study of Amish life across North America since 1963. Drawing on archival material, participant observation and hundreds of interviews, the authors provide an authoritative, in-depth exploration of Amish life in America.

**In the Kingdom of the Ditch** by Todd Davis (Michigan State University Press, 2013, $19.95) is the Mennonite poet's latest collection. The poems address Davis' father's diagnosis with pancreatic cancer, his death and its effect on Davis' family; his sons' childhoods and approaching entrance into manhood; his marriage of 25 years; the honest struggles of faith.

**Notes from the House of the Dead: A New Translation** by Fyodor Dostoevsky, translated by Boris Jakim (Eerdmans, 2013, $24), is an account of the horrific conditions in Siberian labor camps. First published in 1861, the novel is based on Dostoevsky's experience as a political prisoner.

**The Names of Our Tears: An Amish-Country Mystery** by P.L. Gaus (Plume, 2013, $15) is the latest in Gaus' series of murder mysteries. When a dangerous drug ring destroys the life of a young woman, it threatens to infiltrate the Amish community.

## Books from the editors



***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

$16.95

Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com

Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners

EVERETT J. THOMAS
JOHANN

Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

$8.95

Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

*Johann* was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

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**College Mennonite Church**, Goshen, Ind., is looking for a ***full-time administrative pastor***. Potential candidates can contact Search Committee Chair Bruce Stahly via email at b.stahly@frontier.com. For job description visit www.collegemennonite.org.

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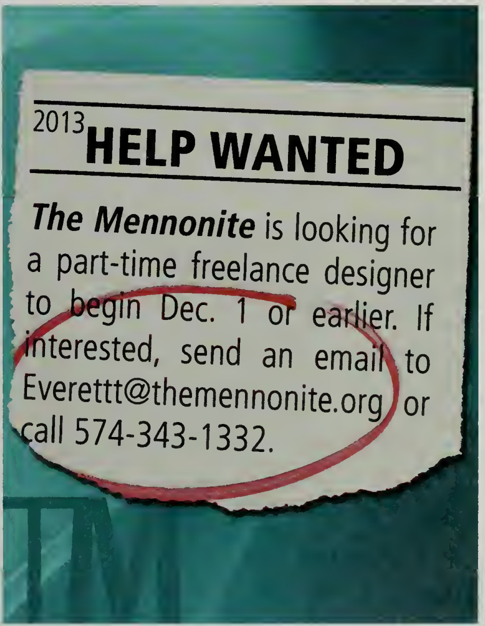

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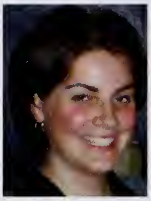
# Giving and receiving



**Sherah-Leigh Gerber** attends Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church and is coordinator of volunteers for Ohio Conference. She lives in Apple Creek, Ohio, with her husband and two young children.

Falling from the bleachers at a high school baseball game is embarrassing. Falling from the bleachers on top of your toddler daughter while trying to protect your pregnant belly (apparently) leads to pain (sprained ankle) and inconvenience (bed rest).

As with many experiences in my life, it didn't take long for some "gifts from God" (also known as opportunities to grow in faith) to rise to the surface.

In a recent spiritual direction session, as I was unpacking what was going on within me as I was anticipating the major transition of adding a family member, I was challenged to reflect on being a receiver. No better time to put that into practice than through the forced dependence of bed rest.

**Service and community** are two of the prominent hallmarks of Anabaptist Mennonite witness. Many are drawn into the church because of the Christian community they find there. Many of us have given significant resources (our time, talent or finances) to service in both long- and short-term settings. While we know the realities of community life are challenging, in many ways participating in both community and service gives us a personal sense of satisfaction.

So often we find ourselves in the position of giving. And that feels good. But what is community if others cannot serve us? What does it say about our faith and commitment to the church family if we cannot be gracious receivers as well as givers?

What does it say about our faith and commitment to the church family if we cannot be gracious receivers as well as givers?

Most of us have found ourselves, at some point in time, in need of support and assistance. Or we have journeyed with someone through a serious illness or trial that has required ongoing support from the community. We may chide these people for not eagerly receiving all that is being offered—the church genuinely wants to demonstrate love. But when you find yourself in the position of need, when you must allow others to do for you, the realization hits that in church we are not often taught how to be gracious receivers.

In his book *The Circle Maker*, Mark Batterson makes the point that we Christians love miracles. We love to see them happen in our communities, to be able to testify to God's activity. However, we don't love having circumstances in our lives that require God to intervene miraculously.

Aren't the ethics of service and community much the same? We love to help others. We are grateful for a church community that supports, nurtures and cares, but we're not so thankful for the circumstances we find ourselves in that require us to depend on God through the service of our Christian community.

**Graciously receiving is hard work.** I thought it would be great to have an excuse to lie on the couch, watch television, read and have my husband take care of our daughter and the house for few days. But it was difficult to be confined, unable to do the smallest of tasks for myself, constantly weighing if it was worth asking someone else to bring me what I needed or if I could put off certain tasks until the time I'd be able to do it (the right way) myself.

The more I have reflected on this experience, the questions from my spiritual director and other times in my life when I have received, I'm challenged by what it takes to be a gracious receiver. Receiving requires the following:

- Space: There must be room for the gift in our lives. We are forced to give up something that would have normally filled the time when we would have been busy. Sometimes it's a choice to make space. Sometimes we are forced.
- Release of expectations: Can we allow others to do things for us, even if it's not how we would have accomplished the task? Releasing our own expectations and time frames is hard but necessary work if we truly are to receive the gift from another.
- Trust: Do we believe others will follow through? Can we rest in the comfort and presence of the community's provision?

This act of gracious receiving is not limited to having our needs met in times of hardship by our community but also has application in our spiritual journey. Do we open our hearts and minds to God? Do we acknowledge our areas of weakness and need? Are we willing, eager even, to receive from God? Or instead is our pride in self-sufficiency so great that we also reject what God may want us to receive? Do we make space, release our expectations and trust that God will provide in our time of greatest need?

ONLINE

## FILM REVIEW

**The East** (PG-13) follows an operative for a private intelligence firm who infiltrates an anarchist group called The East that carries out covert attacks on major corporations. However, as she befriends the members of the group, she questions her mission. This is a rare film that addresses social justice issues without taking clear sides. It also includes some fine acting. *—Gordon Houser*

## DVD REVIEW

**The House I Live In** (NR) is an outstanding documentary that shows how the war on drugs is really a war on the poor. It delves into the U.S. prison industrial complex and how it subsidizes thousands of jobs and locks up millions of innocent people. This important film shows the consequences of this "war" for all of us.*—gh*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**For a Church to Come: Experiments in Postmodern Theory and Anabaptist Thought** by Peter C. Blum (Herald Press, 2013, $21.99) combines Anabaptist writers such as Yoder and postmodern intellectuals such as Foucault and Derrida to talk about knowledge, meaning, commitments and action. Despite the heady topic, Blum's writing is mostly accessible and has helpful insights, like his characterizing Anabaptist-Mennonite as "a certain Christocentric 'will-to-community' that we do not yet know how to hold in the same embrace with our liberal individualism."*—gh*

**Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self** by Richard Rohr (Jossey-Bass, 2013, $19.95) argues that the search for our true self requires a dying to our false self. "Resurrection," he writes, "is not a miracle to be proven; it is a manifestation of the wholeness that we are all meant to experience, even in this world." The title comes from a Gerard Manley Hopkins poem and likens the true self to a diamond buried deep within us. This book will challenge and inspire many readers.*—gh*

# Graphic images in media

Should U.S. media publish graphic images of war, abortion or car accidents? Or do such images do more harm than good?

Conor Friedersdorf raises such questions in "The Gutless Press" (*The Atlantic*, July/August).

He discusses coverage of the trial of Dr. Kermit Gosnell, the abortionist convicted of delivering babies alive and then murdering them. This coverage included descriptions of what Gosnell called "fetal demise" far more graphic than anything normally found in the media.

Friedersdorf points out that "members of the pro-life movement have long believed that they can win converts by confronting Americans with 'what abortion really is' in the most-graphic terms possible."

On the other hand, critics of U.S. drone strikes wish "more Americans saw graphic photos of the results: the charred corpses, the severed arms and legs, the bloodied children."

While many pro-life activists charge the U.S. media with a pro-choice bias, the fact is, writes Friedersdorf, "the American media sanitize almost all death. He adds, "During the Iraq War, an American could watch hours of TV coverage without ever seeing the dead body of a U.S. soldier."

While the news media have grown less likely to publish explicitly violent images in recent decades, portrayals of violence in film and video games have intensified.

Why the change? Friedersdorf believes it's about not offending the audience. "And because consumers do not want grisly images, neither do advertisers," he writes. At the same time, the military has clamped down on access to combat scenes.

Friedersdorf notes that "other countries' media do not contrive such a bloodless world." He cites a study that shows that foreign media are generally more willing to show graphic images.

Susan Sontag, among others, has argued that showing graphic images might lead to other responses than "shocking people of conscience into action." They may, in fact, inure us to horror.

Graphic images of war certainly haven't stopped violent killings, Friedersdorf notes. But that doesn't mean they haven't had an impact on public thinking. He cites certain images from the Vietnam War and the photos of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison as examples.

Friedersdorf goes on to point out that "images in media determine not just what we see but how journalists describe the world, and thus what we know about it and how we talk about it." It might be harder for the government to talk about "collateral damage," for example, "if an article or TV footage included the image of a bloody corpse," he writes.

Likewise, he adds, "it is difficult to discuss 'fetal demise' abstractly when the accompanying images show the little arms and legs that were dismembered."

Without doubt, images are powerful. Think about artwork depicting scenes from Scripture (no photos are available): David holding Goliath's severed head, soldiers killing infants on Herod's orders, Jesus' crucifixion. We may read these stories without fully appreciating their horror.

Friedersdorf concludes that "the case for publishing graphic images of killing has less to do with the merits of a specific policy view than with photography's power to keep us from evading a subject entirely."

We need to face what's going on in our world, and images can help us do that.

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

*(Continued from page 5)*

"MW USA is working to unshackle those deep roots of stagnancy in regards to recognizing the power of women." We deeply appreciate the authenticity, integrity and skills of editor DeBerg and are inspired by her spiritual calling. She is in a unique position to influence young and not-so-young readers to explore their faith through a variety of media.

We found it surprising that this first in-depth article about an editor focused on an avocational interest while only mentioning her work with *Timbrel*. We encourage *The Mennonite* to follow Curt Weaver's recommendation for a follow-up article about how Claire hopes to share her faith through her work with MW USA.—*Ruth Lapp Guengerich, Goshen, Ind., and Rhoda Keener, Shippensburg, Pa., Mennonite Women USA co-directors*

### Concern about Gettysburg

We are hearing so much about the huge amounts of money that are being spent to revive the Gettysburg (Pa.) Park, site of a terrible Civil War battle. It seems that a peace-loving church should speak against it, even though they say no governmental funds are used. Isn't it really a slam on African-Americans today and in praise of war?—*Winifred Paul, Scottdale, Pa.*

### This is an NRA nation

Thanks to Ronald E. Holland ("Blessed Are the Peacemakers," July) for bringing out some numbers. The National Rifle Association membership is between 1 and 1.5 percent of the population of the United States, yet they get more publicity than seven denominations that have more members each than the NRA.

The NRA is in "control (of) half the U.S. Senate, the majority of the U.S. Congress and majorities in the legislatures of the red states."

Some call us a Christian nation (people are Christian, not a nation), but it sounds more like an NRA nation. I call for Christians to boldly stand for Christ. Are NRA members afraid of being known as such? But they are not our examples.

Let us do what Jesus commanded: "Go and make disciples, ... baptizing ... teaching them to obey everything." The reward is that Jesus will be with us always.

Some evidence of that happening is in other fine articles in the July issue. —*Carl Smeltzer, Harrisonburg, Va.*

### Thank you for image with article

Thank you for publishing my article, "Entertaining Angels" (July). I am writing to congratulate whoever chose the image for the title page. It is the "angel of independence" monument from Mexico City. It couldn't be a more perfect image. Not only is it from Mexico City, but it also has the angel motif. Please pass on my thanks to the person responsible for choosing this image. —*Don Clymer, Harrisonburg, Va.*

**Attention pastors**

Special mailing of *The Mennonite's* **Phoenix 2013** issue available

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# God sighting in a dinner guest

*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*—Jesus in John 12:32

A few weeks ago, I watched the Holy Spirit draw a dinner guest to God as a new follower of Jesus. (Because our guest hailed from a country that suppresses Christian witness and this story could keep others from obtaining visas to the United States, I have altered some names and left out some details in this account).

One Sunday, the worship service in a nearby church drew a foreign guest—a professor of philosophy from a large university in Asia. He was in the country for just a few weeks, joining Mei, his wife, who was completing a term as a visiting scholar at a nearby university.

On the first Sunday that professor Xu Zhang visited the church, he was intrigued by the title of the International Sunday School lesson for that day, printed in the church bulletin: "Preparing with Plans After Death."

The visitor wanted to learn more about death, so he came to the class. It so happened that Bonnie, my wife, was a guest teacher that day. The professor of philosophy told the class that his father, a Buddhist, fears death but that his mother, a Christian, does not. Xu grew up in the countryside and was the first person from his village to go to college. His mother, the only Christian in the village, walked many miles every month to meet with other Christians.

**Xu came back the following Sunday** with more questions. Because of his deep interest in Christian faith, Bonnie and I invited Xu and his spouse Mei into our home for a meal, along with another couple from the Sunday school class. We spent much of the evening learning about life in Asia, where both Xu and Mei teach in a university. We learned, too, about the extreme deprivation that Xu's family experienced during a time of revolution and upheaval in his nation. As our guest shared about his spiritual doubts and fears, I sensed that God's Spirit was at work in him, gently tugging him toward belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Three times as Xu talked that evening, his wife Mei commented that she had never heard him speak that way before. We all watched with awe as he clarified his desire to become a follower of Jesus Christ. In response, I shared with him the Four Spiritual Truths, written by J. Nelson Kraybill.

While Mei is not a Christian and was not ready to make a similar commitment to Christ, she seemed eager to help Xu find peace in his life. So he prayed a prayer to receive Christ and spoke of the joy he was feeling inside. A week later, he stood before the entire congregation and gave testimony to his new life in Christ.

Xu has since become an enthusiastic student of Scripture, guided in his study and Christian walk by John, a member of the Sunday school class.

A week after his new birth in Christ, he asked us to help find a biblical name with a significant meaning that he could adopt. After looking at several choices, he changed his first name to Joseph.

Although professor Zhang and his wife soon returned to Asia, he has stayed in touch with John, his new friend, who is discipling him in the way of Christ.

As I reflect on this joy-filled event, I see the Spirit of God at work in many different ways to lead this guest to faith in Jesus Christ. I see the faithfulness of God in the life of his mother, a Christian who persevered in prayer. I see God at work in the Sunday school class, showing hospitality to a total stranger who showed up in class one day. And I thank the Spirit of God, who orchestrated it all. TM

I see God at work in the Sunday school class, showing hospitality to a total stranger who showed up in class one day.

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# Was Phoenix worth it?

Everett J. Thomas

The decision to hold Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention in Phoenix in 2013 generated calls over the past two years for it to be held elsewhere. Arizona's draconian immigration laws were the reason many people did not want the convention there and the reason some stayed away.

So was it worth it? Yes. But the experience leaves some long-range consequences.

The first consequence may be a financial loss that this smaller gathering will hand the Executive Board. But it will be some time before that number is known (see box).

A second consequence is the relational damage lingering among many Hispanic Mennonites for what they felt was indifference to the ways the U.S. immigration system criminalizes undocumented residents.

A third consequence may be that we'll not see a convention on or near the West Coast for a generation. A decision has already been made to hold the 2015 and 2019 conventions in Kansas City, Mo.

Conventions remind us that the church of today, with all its joys and sorrows, is a microcosm of the gathered people of God.

But the Phoenix convention surprisingly appeared to be positive for most participants. Here is what one pastor blogged from Phoenix to his congregation back home:

*Planners of gatherings like this are not known for being gutsy, making waves and courting controversy. ... But so it is here. By focusing heavily on immigration as a biblical, theological, ecclesiological and spiritual issue, our leaders give us something substantial to discuss in the delegate sessions, hallways and on the steaming sidewalks.*

Indeed, immigration was the main focus of the convention, and the setting was an integral, even an essential context for the experience. Many people traveled into northern Mexico and visited with people deported from the United States. Others visited detention centers and courts where undocumented people were herded in groups before the judge and summarily sentenced. Others learned of the way private detention centers make big money for private investors and the significant economy growing up around an "immigration industrial complex."

How the church should respond to the broken U.S. immigration system, however, is not a settled matter (see page 16). The delegates reviewed a 2003 resolution but could not simply reaffirm it without more processing. In the end, they adopted a statement supporting the decade-old resolution and asking that more time be given to refine it.

In spite of the heat, in spite of the travel distances for most people and in spite of the tensions around the decision to hold the convention in Arizona, a good-hearted lightness prevailed during the week. This may be attributed to the provocative speakers and evocative worship services. They demonstrated why we hold such events: Conventions remind us that the church of today, with all its joys and sorrows, is a microcosm of the gathered people of God.—*ejt*

### Phoenix convention finances

"Revenue is $490,000 less than what we originally budgeted for," Glen Guyton, Mennonite Church USA's convention coordinator, said on July 15. "This refers only to registration numbers. Of course, we reduced expenses due to the lower than budgeted revenue."

Guyton said he will have actual numbers in several weeks.—*Everett J. Thomas*

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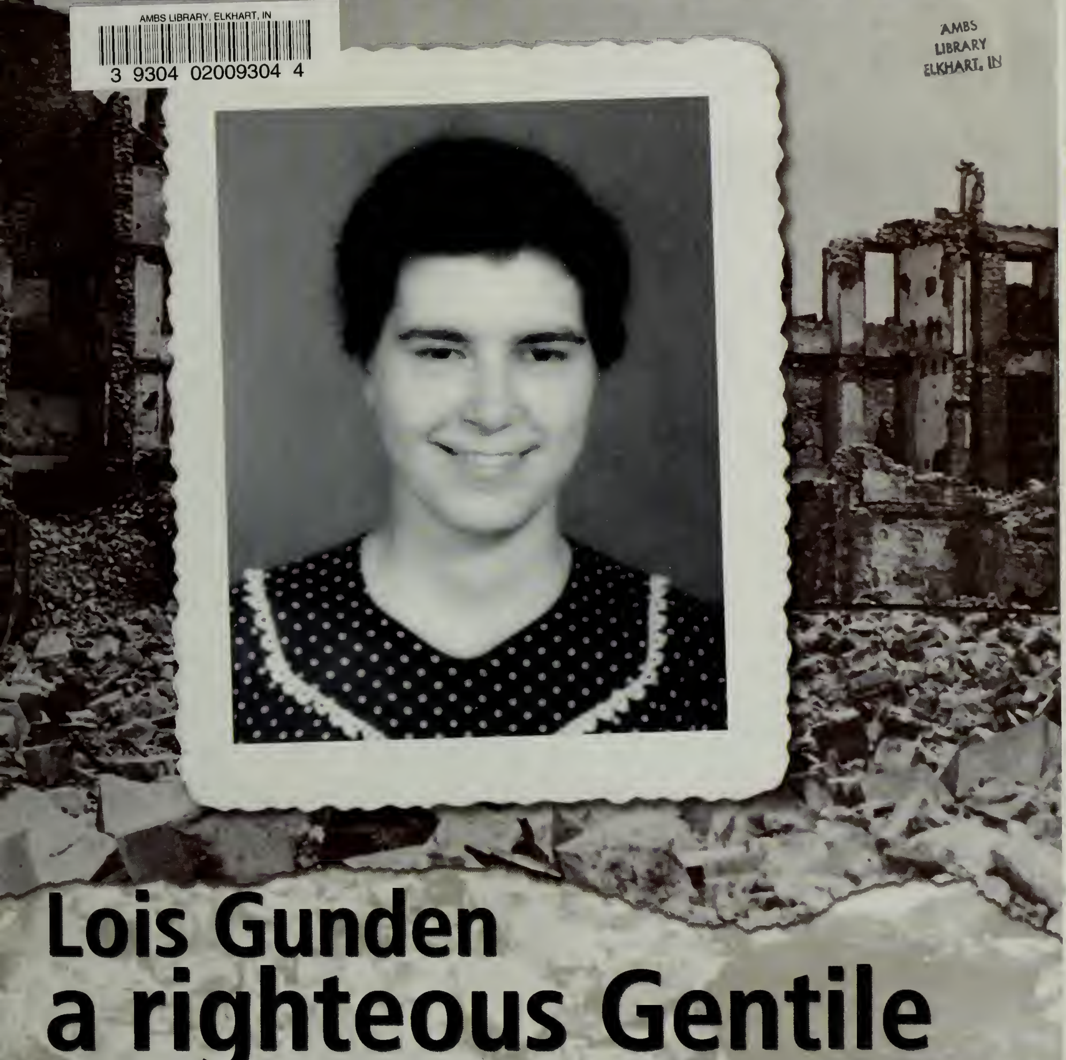

# Lois Gunden a righteous Gentile

September 2013

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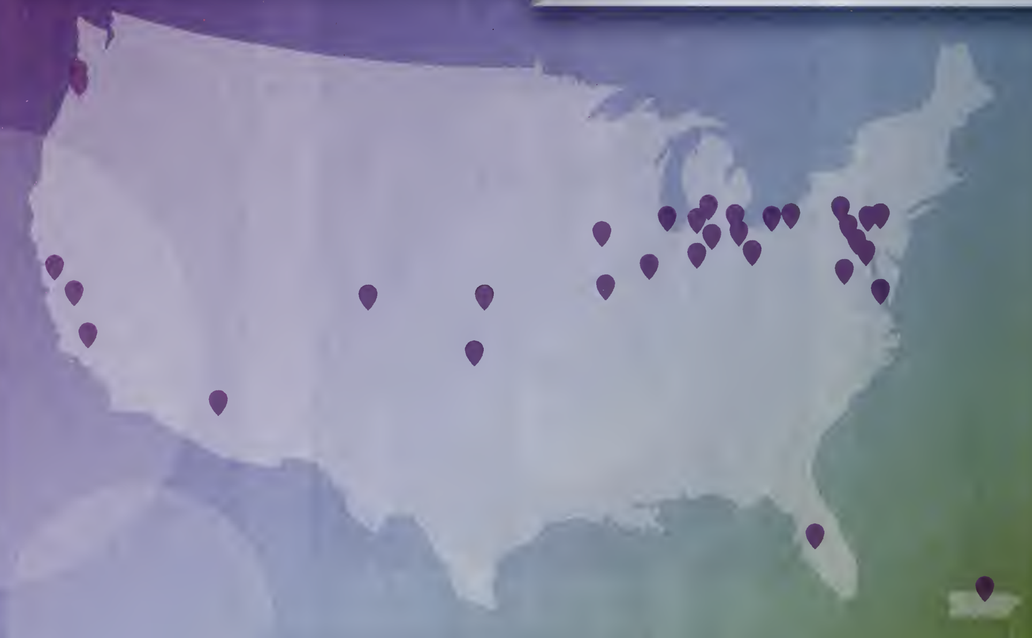

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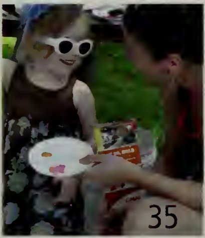

ON THE COVER: Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.

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September 2013 | Volume 16, Number 9

*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

**Results should be public**

Regarding John Howard Yoder and the statement posted on the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) website (see also page 45): The statement falls short of an apology. In fact it comes off more as an appreciation of Yoder's scholarly work than as a profound statement of contrition. It reads, "We regret the hurt. ..." This is a statement of regret rather than a clearcut statement of apology.

My father, Ross T. Bender, served as AMBS dean for many years and found Yoder a difficult personality, to say the least. Dad left the seminary in 1984 for an extended leave to pastor at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakeland, Colo. When he returned, the faculty had finally made the decision to bar Yoder from campus. My father never received an apology from the man.

After my father died in the spring of 2011, I wrote to president Sara Wenger Shenk and other faculty members detailing my concern about the abuse my father suffered from working with this man—not sexual abuse but manipulative behaviors. Also, before the final faculty witnesses to Yoder's sexually abusive behavior (in AMBS classrooms) pass away, it needs to be spelled out in explicit detail how this man operated.

The AMBS statement says: "References to Yoder's submission to and completion of the disciplinary process with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference will be made as appropriate with students, future faculty and scholars." This is waffling. These results should be published openly.

I should say that before my father died he forgave John (albeit posthumously). He viewed him as a sort of Jean Calvin, however that may be taken.—*Ross Lynn Bender, Philadelphia*

**Phoenix convention coverage**

I found the coverage of the convention very helpful, since I wasn't there. I'm grateful for the work to describe what went on in Phoenix. Now I feel like I have a sense for the meetings.

I did notice a strange addition of a "(sic)" in the middle of a quote of someone who was talking about "the kindom of God." I take it the editor thought the person meant to say "kingdom of God" but forgot the "g." Actually, "kindom of God" is language developed in Latina theology (particularly in what's called "mujerista theology") as a way to get around the patriarchal and hierarchical image of kingship. If interested in "the kindom of God," read the work of the late Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz.—*Isaac Villegas, Chapel Hill, N.C.*

**Editor's note:** *We appreciate this information. We added the "(sic)" after finding no definition for "kindom" at dictionary.com.*

As a person who was not able to attend the convention in Phoenix, I just want you to know that now I feel like I was there (almost). The August issue was truly one of your best, if I may say so. My husband and I read it cover to cover. Thank you so much for the excellent coverage of a very broad range of topics.—*Linda O. Krueger, human resources coordinator, Mennonite Mission Network*

**Censorship and 'graphic' images**

Gordon Houser once again makes us stop and think, this time with his "Graphic Images in Media" (Mediaculture, August). He quotes Conor Friedersdorf saying, "the American media sanitize almost all death. ... During the Iraq War, an American could watch hours of TV coverage without ever seeing the dead body of a U.S. soldier."

Friedersdorf is soft on the near-complete military censorship of coverage of violence in war zones. At the outbreak of the first Gulf War, the U.S. military leadership vowed not to let photographers into the live battle areas because "the media lost the war in Vietnam for us, and that's not going to happen again." So they created a system of one "pool" reporter to go in but only exactly where the military wanted. Thus, censorship.

Then, a reflection on one of the most misused words in the English language, "graphic." As an art teacher, I know that "graphic" means a reproducible image, such as a wood block print, an etching, a photograph or video image.

To use "graphic" in the sense of violent or gory, that is something that has incorrectly crept into our language. If you want violent, gory or disturbing, look no further than the second edition (1685) of the *Martyrs Mirror*.—*Brian D. Stucky, Goessel, Kan.*

**Fructose does not cause obesity**

In response to Gordon Houser's article on obesity and fructose (Miscellany, August): I believe it is inappropriate for *The Mennonite* and publications like it to get on a "band wagon" or suggest directly or indirectly that others do. It is nonsensical to think that any complex problems can be reduced to one simple item.

Obesity is not the result of fructose or any other single item in our diet. It is not due to any single food item in our diet or even a food group. And removing single items from our diet will not have any significant effect. People are obese because they eat too much, not because they eat the "wrong" things. Obesity is related to when we eat, where we eat and why we eat. Obesity will not be affected by campaigns against specific items or foods but by a change in our "culture of food."

The readership of *The Mennonite* would be well served by having articles such as this one reviewed by a medical/scientific review committee. —*Dwight A. Kauffman, Pandora, Ohio*

**Concerned about freemasonry**

Should the Mennonite church examine Freemasonry? Though many other denominations have done so, the only Mennonite statement I've found so far is from a single author, Daniel Kauffman, in 1898. It is time for an update, and I suggest the following resources as a starting place:

In 1952, Walton Hannah published the first version of his book *Darkness Visible: A Christian Appraisal of Freemasonry*, which delivered verbatim transcriptions of Freemason rituals. The 2008, Baronius Press edition states that the accuracy of these transcriptions was confirmed by Commander Higham, Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England.

In his pioneering book *Masonry, Conspiracy Against Christianity* (Publius Press, 1997), historian A. Ralph Epperson examines passages from Masonic publications and provides a wealth of citations for further study.

There are other resources to help Christians who are caught in Freemasonry. William Schnoebelen left Masonry, and in his book *Masonry Beyond the Light,* he shows why he believes membership in the group is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ. He also shows how Masons can properly repent and leave their lodge. Further resources are available online, such as www.ephesians5-11.org.—*Jon Ebersole, Affoltern am Albis, Switzerland*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Lois Gunden Clemens is only the fourth U.S. citizen and perhaps only Mennonite to be named by Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as Righteous Among the Nations. Lois will receive the formal award posthumously for her courageous work in France saving Jewish children during World War II. We commissioned her niece Mary Jean Gunden to write the piece as this month's cover story (page 12).

In this issue we also publish an article that has been in the planning stages for three years (page 26). It was written by an anonymous Mennonite man who describes his struggles to remain faithful to church teachings while dealing with same-sex attraction. He originally communicated with a pseudonym through his counselor. In order to check the veracity of Anonymous' story, we asked for and received a letter confirming it from the counselor's agency.

In his June Mediaculture column, associate editor Gordon Houser described a new Herald Press book on John Howard Yoder's writings as "remarkably relevant to Christians today." The comment sparked a critical response from one of our readers, who then continued to speak on social media about the hurt remaining among Yoder's victims, and the blogosphere continues to see posts from others. So in News Analysis, we publish three pieces related to the discussion: a blog post by Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., an AMBS faculty statement about teaching Yoder, and excerpts from a July 28, 1992, news story in the former *The Mennonite* (page 44).

Associate editor Anna Groff pulls together a survey of "edgy Mennonite blogs and websites" on page 40. —*Editor*

## AMC sets Reconciliation Discernment Committee

ELKHART, Ind.—Eight years after disciplining the Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church for a membership policy that grants full membership to LGBTQ individuals, the Allegheny Mennonite Conference has launched a "reconciliation discernment" process by commissioning a 10-member committee to discern if reconciliation of some type between the conference and the congregation is possible. The commissioning came at AMC's annual celebration gathering Aug. 1-3 at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mount Pleasant, Pa. AMC had seen a purpose statement for the committee brought by conference leaders at a previous delegate session.

"The purpose of the Reconciliation Discernment Committee is to explore how we live in unity as diverse congregations within Allegheny Mennonite Conference," says the statement. "The committee will examine how we discern God's will and work together when we disagree on the issue of same sex relationships."

J. Lorne Peachey, AMC moderator, said on Aug. 5 that the committee will include four members from AMC and four members from Hyattsville. Donna Mast, who is the AMC conference minister, will serve as staff for the group but not be a voting member of the committee. The conference has asked Don Sharp, pastor of the Stumptown Mennonite Church in Bird-in-Hand, Pa., to serve as facilitator.

AMC also heard of Hyattsville's July 28 vote to call Michelle Burkholder, who recently married another woman, to serve as an associate pastor. The vote was 98 percent in favor.

According to Peachey, there was no discussion during conference sessions of Hyattsville's latest decision.
—*Everett J. Thomas*

Laurie Oswald Robinson

### Singing in Chin at Western District Conference

Members of Chin Emmanuel Church in Houston sing at Western District Conference's annual assembly, held Aug. 2-3 in North Newton, Kan. Delegates voted to accept Chin Emmanuel as a member of WDC.—*Gordon Houser*

## Mennonites, Lutherans continue reconciliation

GOSHEN, Ind.—A six-member task force appointed by Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Faith and Life Commission met at Goshen College July 20-23 with counterparts from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to review progress on the commitments the two global communions made to each other during a service of reconciliation in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010.

At that service, which culminated nearly five years of dialogue, representatives of the LWF asked forgiveness for the actions of their forebearers against the Anabaptists in the 16th century. MWC leaders committed themselves to promote a more balanced interpretation of the Lutheran-Anabaptist story, continue conversation on unresolved issues and encourage their member churches to seek greater cooperation with Lutherans in service.

In their joint meetings at Goshen, the two task forces affirmed the trilateral conversations on baptism moving forward among the MWC, LWF and Catholic churches.

The MWC task force affirmed a website, www.anabaptistwiki.org, sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College, that provides easy access to resources related to Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue. The MWC task force called on the Faith and Life Commission to take a stronger role in encouraging Mennonite colleges, universities, seminaries, historical societies, information centers and tour groups to incorporate the story of MWC-LWF reconciliation.
—*Goshen College*

## *Claiming Faith* released

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—Believing it important to pass faith from one generation to another, MennoMedia has published *Claiming Faith: Youth Discover the Confession of Faith*. This new tool will familiarize youth with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

Conversations with Mennonite youth pastors and leaders showed strong support for using print and video teaching elements in *Claiming Faith*. Support also came for providing practical ways to live faith and reflection times that include spiritual practices. The 10 sessions in *Claiming Faith* help youth understand and claim faith from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective.—*MennoMedia*

## Former Hesston College teachers release book on multiracial ancestry

HESSTON, Kan.—Former Hesston College instructors Sharon Cranford, Wichita, Kan., and Dwight Roth, Hesston, have released their book *Kinship Concealed: Amish Mennonites/African-American Family Connections* (Legacy Book Publishing, 2013)—the story of Cranford's, an African American Baptist, and Roth's, a white Mennonite-Episcopalian, unexpected shared heritage.

Part semiautobiography and part historical fiction, the book documents the historical multiracial lineage of Amish brothers Jacob and John Mast, who immigrated from Switzerland to Philadelphia. Jacob, Roth's ancestor, stayed in Pennsylvania and became the first Amish bishop ordained in the United States, while John, Cranford's ancestor, left the Amish church and moved south during the peak of slavery in America. John's grandson, Rueben, became a slave owner in North Carolina and fathered a child with a slave girl; the child became Cranford's great-great-grandfather Charley Mast.

The duo celebrated the book and family connections with a gathering for descendants of Jacob and John Mast on July 29 at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa., near where Jacob Mast lived and ministered more than 250 years ago.—*Hesston College*

MCC photo/Sarah Adams

**Children in Syria**

This Syrian girl, whose name is withheld for security reasons, was singing, playing musical chairs and painting on the March day when Mennonite Central Committee visited the temporary Lebanon community where she lives. The activities were coordinated by MCC's partner, Development for People and Nature Association, to bring a sense of normalcy and pleasure into the lives of refugee children.—*MCC*

## MDS at work in Alberta

CALGARY, Alberta—Nancy Thiessen is one of about 250 people who volunteered with Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS) to help clean up in High River, Alberta. The city of about 13,000 was the hardest hit during the floods in southern Alberta in late June.

"We've never dealt with anything like this in Canada before," says Janet Plenert, MDS director for Canadian operations. After the flood, Plenert and Jim Dyck (MDS Alberta) began constant communication with the Alberta unit, a group of about 12 volunteers across the province.

MDS is now working on transitioning from emergency response to long-term recovery. They will be looking for individuals and groups to volunteer for a week at a time as they start rebuilding. The hope is that this work will start in October.—*MDS*

## Public witness calls for protecting Las Pavas, Colombia, farmers

CHICAGO—On July 26, Christian Peacemaker Teams workers and supporters took to the streets of Chicago to call for an end to violence against the community of Las Pavas, Colombia.

Donning cardboard palm trees and straw hats, participants dramatized palm oil producer Aportes San Isidro's acts of aggression toward the subsistence farmers of Las Pavas.

In recent months, the company's armed security guards have destroyed crops, damaged farm equipment, fire bombed homes and buildings, killed animals, threatened people at gunpoint, and brutally attacked one community member with a machete. Despite government orders granting the land to the Las Pavas community, Colombian police have done nothing to stop the company's attacks and encroachment upon Las Pavas territory.

Five members of the group took a letter to the office of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, drawing the connection between U.S. aid for training Colombian police and the lack of law enforcement to protect the people of Las Pavas. The office door was locked.—*CPT*

## Bridgefolk conference meets in Canada

Collegeville, Minn.—Meeting for the first time in Canada, the 12th annual Bridgefolk conference was held July 25-28 at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, under the theme "Reconciliation: A Way to Peace."

Bridgefolk is a movement of sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who meet to celebrate each other's traditions, explore each other's practices and honor each other's contribution to the mission of Christ's church.

Previous conferences alternated between Catholic and Mennonite locations in the United States. Of the 60 participants at this year's conference, 35 were Mennonite and 25 Catholic.

Keynote speakers were Christian McConnell, who teaches liturgical studies at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, and John Rempel, director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, both of whom spoke on practices of reconciliation within their respective churches' traditions.—*Bridgefolk*

# Is God in the details?

**Cyneatha Millsaps** is lead pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

*For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity*—Proverbs 1:2-3

Proverbs provides us with basic instructions for righteous living. They are simple and straight to the point. They help us check ourselves and those around us when we need to make sure our actions are in line with God's plan for our lives.

There is an old saying, "The devil is in the details." Basically it refers to the hidden or mysterious processes taking place in a given situation. You will find that there are so many undermining, unspoken and, dare I say, evil intentions that seem to drive our daily planning. My invitation to everyone is to pray, "God is in the detail."

In order for this to happen we have to be honest about our motives with ourselves and those we are working with. Far too often we are not aware that our hidden, private thoughts are driving our public lives. We go through the motion (most times well intended) only to find out we have some hidden bias that causes us not to see.

People of color knew that there would be some new legal maneuvering that would take place; we just weren't sure what that would be.

In the past months, America has been engulfed in the George Zimmerman trial. Many of us were totally confused about what and how things were playing out right in front of our eyes. It was obvious, right? The person standing his ground was Trayvon Martin. Only to be hoodwinked yet again by our justice system.

For people of color, we knew there would be some new legal maneuvering that would take place; we just weren't sure what that would be. We were aware that the "devil was in the detail."

**I remember the O.J. Simpson trial** and a jury of his peers that found him not guilty. America was shocked and angry: How could the jury let him off? The legal arena realized how unpredictable juries could be. The days of all-white male juries were long gone. Jury selection had become unpredictable. So new tactics were put in motion. Today those ways play themselves out in twisting and tangling up the laws so that it is hard for the jury to come back with a verdict any different from what the attorney wanted in the first place. It's no longer about innocence or guilt or who sits on the jury but which judge and attorneys are working on the case. Without an honest judge and a really good attorney, your chances of winning in the courtroom are slim to none. In the courtroom now, the judge and attorneys go behind closed doors and together come up with the instructions for the jury. The smartest, cleverest, wealthiest (based on connections) person in the room will get what he or she wants.

**For most people of color** and/or any person in poverty, a wealthy lawyer with endless options will never be the person defending them because that person is more than likely too expensive. That attorney can charge an enormous hourly fee because they are the smartest, cleverest and/or wealthiest person in the room.

So how do we get the devil out of the details?

We can no longer simply look at the big picture and assume that everyone sees the same thing. We have to break things down, question our own motives and be honest with everyone about our hopes and dreams for the desired outcome.

If the devil is in the details, and I believe he is, then in every thing we do we must pray God into the details. In order for God to be there we have to seek the purest of thoughts and actions on our part. The goal is to talk openly, checking in often with others and understanding that our personal agenda is not the driving force to create the end results.

The next time you sit in a meeting and the group is deciding what is best for everyone, ask everyone to pause and state what they expect to get out of the meeting. We need serious, deeply considered, honest thoughts in order to create something true. This is one way we can begin to get "God in the details." I hope that by simply reminding ourselves to consider if "God is in the details," we will be more aware of when God isn't and the devil is. TM

# Free choice may still be communal

Several years ago the Iglesia Nacional Evangélica Menonita of Guatemala participated in a survey of their members' religious beliefs and practices. As with many surveys, participants were instructed to respond to the questions individually and privately. Each person was to respond with his or her personal convictions regarding the questions—not with answers they imagined the pastor or those conducting the survey wanted to hear.

For most Westerners, such a methodology seems obvious. Our beliefs, after all, are personal; our identity is shaped by the choices we make, and healthy individuals do not simply conform to group pressure. But when members of the indigenous, communally oriented Kekchi congregations were asked to fill out the survey under these conditions, they simply refused. Their dilemma was real: How, they asked, would any of us know what we believe as individuals apart from those beliefs and practices that we hold in common?

**A living faith is always embedded in the relationships of a larger community.**

**The Kekchi refusal to respond individually** to the survey captures beautifully a tension that runs deep within the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition—a tension that is likely to become more and more visible as European and North American Mennonites come into closer contact with members of our global family. On the one hand, the principle of "voluntary," or believer's baptism goes to the very heart of Anabaptist theology. No one, we have taught, is born a Christian. We do not become a follower of Jesus simply because we went to church throughout our childhood. Neither are we Christians by virtue of living in a "Christian nation." Behind this is a deep conviction that the Christian faith cannot be coerced. Instead, the decision to follow Jesus must be made freely by each person in response to God's gift of grace and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, we have also recognized that while our faith may be personal, it is never private. The commitment to follow Jesus is always made in the context of a larger community in which baptism marks the entrance of the new believer into the fellowship of other committed Christians. Moreover, this community is the setting for the Christian formation that follows baptism. Being a Christian, we have taught, is not primarily a matter of absorbing a set of intellectual ideas or a list of doctrinal beliefs. Rather, we come to know what it means to follow Jesus by participating in the formative practices of the church—by sharing in habits of worship, singing, praying, confession, Bible study, footwashing and Communion, and by working, eating and serving together with other members of the body of Christ. In this sense, we come to know what we believe only as we begin to live out these beliefs in relationships with other believers.

Though it may initially seem odd, the Kekchi impulse to respond communally to questions of faith and practice helpfully challenges our temptation to confuse voluntary baptism with the Western tendency to make individual choice a religion unto itself. Sometimes the North American Mennonite emphasis on a purely "voluntary" commitment feeds into the pervasive individualism and autonomy of our culture, making the decision to follow Christ simply one more consumer-oriented choice that promises to enhance your life.

**Deeper encounters with brothers and sisters** in the global church are likely to raise unsettling questions about the relationship between the individual and the community. The recently published Global Mennonite History series, for example, notes several instances in Asia and parts of Africa where the conversion of a local leader prompted an entire village or clan to seek baptism and to join the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship. Such stories are reminiscent of the account in Acts 10:24-48, where we read of Cornelius and his "relatives and close friends" hearing the gospel and being baptized, or the baptism of the members of Lydia's family (Acts 16:15), or the baptism of the Philippian jailer and "all his family" (Acts 16:33).

I do not mean to suggest we return to the practice of infant baptism. After all, faith cannot be coerced. But we should also recognize that the individual decision to follow Jesus is ultimately a decision to yield our will and desires to Christ and to the body of Christ. The Kekchi Mennonite sisters and brothers in Guatemala remind us that a living faith is always embedded in the relationships of a larger community whose shared practices shape not only our hearts but our beliefs and our practices. TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

# Are family issues only women's issues?

One of the conversations going on in our society is a debate about work-life balance: how to balance one's work life with the responsibilities of parenting. However, the conversation is happening almost exclusively among women. Men remain largely excluded from the debate.

In the July/August issue of *The Atlantic*, Stephen Marche's essay "The Masculine Mystique" comments on this exclusion of fathers from debates about balancing work and parenting. He notes that "decisions in heterosexual relationships are made by women and men together," and "when men aren't part of the discussion about balancing work and life, outdated assumptions about fatherhood are allowed to go unchallenged."

Marche challenges a myth perpetuated by Sheryl Sandberg's popular book *Lean In*: that talent and hard work can take you to the top. He calls this "pure balderdash, for women *and* men." The central conflict right now, Marche writes, is "family versus money." The Pew Research Center released a study in March called "Modern Parenthood" that found about half of all working parents say it is difficult to balance career and family responsibilities, with "no significant gap in attitudes between mothers and fathers."

Marche discusses women's rise to economic dominance within the middle class. While "it is an outrage that the male-female wage gap persists," he writes, "over the past 10 years, in almost every country in the developed world, it has shrunk." And "of the 15 fastest-growing job categories in the United States, 13 are dominated by women."

However, the "top leadership positions remain overwhelmingly filled by men." According to the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap" report, he writes, "women around the world hold a mere 20 percent of powerful political positions. In the United States, the female board-membership rate is 12 percent—a disgrace."

But Marche calls this a "hollow patriarchy: the edifice is patriarchal, while the majority of its occupants approach egalitarianism." Nevertheless, men wield power. He notes a paradox: "Masculinity grows less and less powerful while remaining iconic of power. And therefore men are silent. After all, there is nothing less manly than talking about waning manliness."

A 2008 Pew study asked cohabiting male-female couples, "Who makes the decisions at home?" In 26 percent of households, the man did; in 43 percent, the woman did.

This hollow patriarchy "keeps women from power and confounds male identity," Marche writes. He notes parenthetically that "the average working-class guy has the strange experience of belonging to a gender that is railed against for having a lock on power, even as he has none of it."

While enlisting men in the domestic sphere may be a good idea, Marche writes, "the solution is establishing social supports that allow families to function." Sharing the load of parenting equally doesn't matter if the load is unbearable. And it will only become bearable when things like paid parental leave and affordable, quality child care become commonplace. In every state, the average annual cost of day care for two children exceeds the average annual rent, he says.

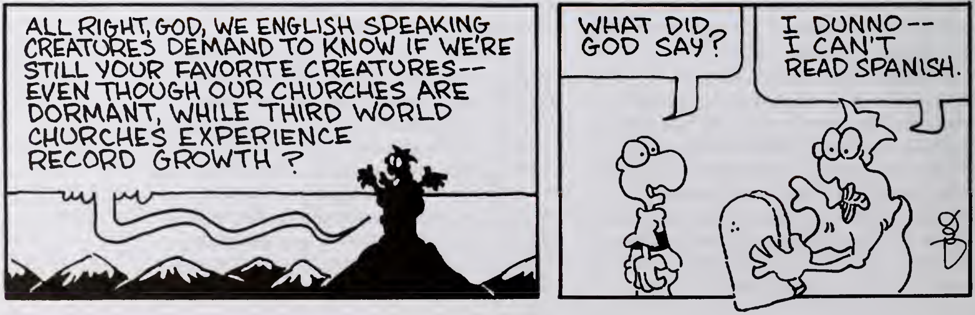
Marche blames men for failing to make themselves heard in this debate. "Where is the chorus of men asking for paternity leave?"

Meanwhile, the society sees parenting as a women's issue. Sandberg writes: "When mothers care for their children, it's 'parenting,' but when fathers care for their children, the government deems it a 'child-care arrangement.' "

Marche concludes, "As long as family issues are miscast as women's issues, they will be dismissed as the pleadings of one interest group among many."—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


ALL RIGHT, GOD, WE ENGLISH SPEAKING CREATURES DEMAND TO KNOW IF WE'RE STILL YOUR FAVORITE CREATURES-- EVEN THOUGH OUR CHURCHES ARE DORMANT, WHILE THIRD WORLD CHURCHES EXPERIENCE RECORD GROWTH ?
WHAT DID GOD SAY?
I DUNNO -- I CAN'T READ SPANISH.

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*—compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “I may have been through hell and back, but I am strong enough to walk through hell with a smile on my face and my head held high. I will not let the situation define who I am.” *—Michelle Knight, held captive in a Cleveland home for almost a decade*

## Delaware 15th state to oppose *Citizens United*

On June 10, Delaware became the 15th state to call on the U.S. House of Representatives to overturn the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, which allows unlimited spending on elections by corporations, unions and other groups. The case also represents an expansion of prior rulings that have reasoned that corporations are people and that corporate election spending qualifies as protected speech under the First Amendment.

These 15 states constitute nearly 80 million people.

An increasing number of legislators, activists and others are building a movement at state and local levels to pressure Congress to take action on the issue.

**32%**
of Daily Show viewers who answered four current-events questions correctly.

**29%**
of Colbert Report viewers who answered those same questions correctly.

**21%, 17% and 16%**
of MSNBC, CNN and Fox News viewers, respectively, who answered the questions correctly.
*—Columbia Journalism Review*

In Delaware’s case, 11 state senators and 24 state representatives signed a letter about the ruling, which was sent to both of Delaware’s senators as well as to U.S. Rep. John Carney (D–Del.)

“The United States of America’s elections should not be permitted to go to the highest bidder,” the letter reads, “and yet this is the risk that rises from the ashes of the *Citizens United* decision.”*—Yes! Magazine*

**13%**
of all U.S. medical-care spending, $176 billion last year, is related to diabetes.
*—Pacific Standard*

## Africa improving greatly

Human development in sub-Saharan Africa has made huge leaps, according to *The Economist*. Secondary school enrollment grew by 48 percent between 2000 and 2008. Over the past decade, malaria deaths in some of the worst-affected countries have declined by 30 percent and HIV infections by up to 74 percent. Life expectancy across Africa has increased by about 10 percent, and child mortality rates in most countries have been falling steeply. Over the past 10 years, real income per person has increased by more than 30 percent, whereas in the previous 20 years it decreased by nearly 10 percent.*—The Marketplace*

## Catholic hospitals differ from bishops

The Catholic Health Association, representing Catholic hospitals across the country, says it no longer objects to the Obama administration’s mandate that all employees receive free birth control coverage. The decision puts the hospitals at odds with the Catholic hierarchy, which in early July rejected the White House’s final regulations. *—Religion News Service*

## Stop subsidizing fossil fuels

The $1.9 trillion spent each year subsidizing fossil fuels adds to the problem of global warming and to the debt of developing countries, according to a new report from the International Monetary Fund. The report, *Energy Subsidy Reform: Lessons and Implications*, says the most direct way of acting to prevent climate change is for governments to stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industry.

The money governments pay to make the price of fossil fuels lower for consumers in developing countries would be better invested in public programs like health and education, according to the report. And greenhouse emissions could be cut by 13 percent per year if wealthier, developed nations adopted carbon tax policies.*—Yes! Magazine*

## Gays find most U.S. faiths unfriendly

Gay Americans are much less religious than the general U.S. population, and about three in 10 of them say they have felt unwelcome in a house of worship, a new study shows. The Pew Research Center’s study, released June 13, details how gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans view many of the country’s prominent faiths: in a word, unfriendly.*—Religion News Service*

### Numbers to ponder

- Average cost per mile to drive an SUV: **75.7 cents**
- Average cost per mile to drive a sedan: **59.6 cents**
- Average cost per mile to ride a bicycle: **10 cents**
- Savings in a year if Americans took one four-mile round-trip bike trip per week instead of driving: **$6.6 billion** (2 billion fewer gallons of gas per year, based on gas prices of $3.64 per gallon)

*—Bicycling*

# Lois Gunden

## Through her work at a home for children in France during Worl

by Mary Jean Gunden

When Lois Gunden went to Vichy France at the request of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) 72 years ago, she hoped to be able to improve the lives of child refugees. She could not have imagined that she would be in a position to save them from deportation and death at Auschwitz.

Lois Gunden (left) and Helen Penner aboard the *S. S. Excambion* in October 1941.

Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.

In 1941, MCC asked her to manage a children's convalescent home, the Villa St. Christophe in Canet-Plage (now Canet-en-Roussillon), France, just 30 miles north of the Spanish border. She was also to oversee a food distribution program in several outlying villages.

Lois' proficiency in French was likely her single most important qualification; she had already attained a master's degree in French and had been a language instructor at Goshen (Ind.) College for two years. Previous experience by MCC workers had shown that language was a significant barrier to effectiveness in assignments outside metropolitan areas of France, as few people spoke any English. She was also well-known to Mennonite decision-makers of

# a righteous Gentile

## Var II, Lois Gunden helped save many Jewish children.

the time, since she had graduated from the Academy and then Goshen College in 1936, after her family had moved to Goshen in 1930.

MCC had successfully collaborated with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to aid those affected by the Spanish Civil War from 1937 through 1940. Workers from both organizations then moved their efforts to aid Spanish refugees, following those who had fled to Southern France and were unable to return to Spain without reprisal.

**With the hindsight of history**, it seems difficult to imagine why church leaders would even consider sending a 26-year-old woman on such a mission. But at the time Lois left the United States in October 1941, it was generally perceived by the U.S. government and American popular opinion that the Vichy Regime was a legitimate state separate from Nazi Germany and German-occupied northern France.

The older girls prepare string beans for the cook. The girl farthest left is Ginette Drucker Kalish.

Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.

Lois Gunden embarked on the "S. S. Excambion" at dock in New York harbor on Oct. 4, 1941. Her companions were Helen S. Penner (b. 1909, Nebraska) and Joseph N. Byler (b. 1895, Pennsylvania), both also traveling to southern France as MCC relief workers. Although there were 99 passengers on the ship when it departed New York City, after a stop in Bermuda two days out, only about a dozen passengers continued on to Lisbon. They had an enjoyable trip, the first such voyage for Lois and Helen. As they approached Lisbon, Lois wrote in a letter to her family on Oct. 14, "Oh yes, a German bomber came toward us this morning as we were on deck drinking bouillon. It circled over us a couple times and then flew on. That was our first sign of warring Europe."

Lois' proficiency in French was likely her single most important qualification.

Their small party traveled through Portugal and Spain to France; Lois Gunden and Helen Penner began work at Villa St. Christophe on Oct. 22. Joseph Byler went on to Lyon, about 300 miles north, where he relieved Jesse Hoover as the director of the small MCC operation in France. Also working from the Lyon office was Henry Buller, who had already been serving for eight months.

The Villa St. Christophe was a 20-room summer home located on the Mediterranean beach. It was reasonably comfortable, although cold and drafty in the winter, and its sewage system was prone to backing-up. They cooked on a coal-fired stove and did laundry by hand. The home held 60 children, and at the time Lois arrived, the majority of them were Spanish refugees; almost all were brought to the home from the Rivesaltes refugee camp about 12 miles away.

**Most of the children at the Villa** had been treated in the camp infirmary or at the hospital for

Children at the Villa play in the sand. Photo courtesy of MC USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.

Lois recognized that most of these children were traumatized by their experiences.

refugees in nearby Perpignan. Some were severely malnourished when they arrived, and all of them needed a good bath and delousing. Lois described her first visit to Rivesaltes on Nov. 18, 1941: "Outstanding and unforgettable memories of day—braveness of boys when they discovered they were leaving without parents; sight of bunks with people sitting hunchbacked on them; dirty and bare kitchen—provisions only for one day; eagerness with which children drank milk; possibility for terrible cold when wind blows." The camp at Rivesaltes truly was a horrific place housing 8,000 people without adequate food, water, shelter or sanitation; death by starvation or disease was a daily occurrence in the camp.

MCC wanted to expand its operation in France, and Lois was assigned to find other possible locations. When she was successful, Lois would organize and direct the new operation. While there were properties available to rent, unfortunately, furnishings were impossible to find. Mattresses, sheets and other textiles, kitchen supplies and utensils, tableware—all were in short supply. Lois continued to search for other locations throughout her stay but was never successful.

**Helen Penner suffered a nervous breakdown** in January 1942, only about two months after her arrival. Lois spent nights with Helen in the hospital, and the physician's recommendation was a lengthy rest cure, after which Helen should return to the United States. Lois found a suitable place for Helen in the spa-town of Vernet-les-Bains, where she stayed until arrangements could be made for her return to the United States in mid-May. In working through that crisis together, Lois learned that she could count on her staff, who themselves were refugees.

Mary Elmes, a Quaker aid worker in nearby Perpignan, was Lois' direct link to AFSC operations. Mary, from Ireland, had been a relief worker in Spain during the war and had moved into France with AFSC. Lois had great respect for Mary, and her friendship and mentoring offered a camaraderie that Lois very much appreciated.

MCC's need for a French speaker was not only to be able to communicate while undertaking normal business but also to be able to work with French officials and bureaucrats. They required virtually all legitimate activities to be documented by various papers; identity cards, permission-to-travel cards, ration cards, permission for and documentation of the transfer of children, all required official signatures, stamps or periodic renewals.

**While Lois was kept busy** with a wide range of tasks, she found some time every day to spend with the children. They ranged from toddlers to age 16. They walked on the beach nearly every sunny day, and presented an interesting sight as they walked in pairs in line. The older children helped the staff with various chores, such as carrying water, bringing supplies from the tram to the Villa and helping prepare vegetables for cooking. It was from seeing them regain their health and return to some of the simple pleasures of childhood that Lois gained the most satisfaction. For her, they were the closest replacement to the family she so missed.

About every two weeks, a group of three to seven children returned to the camp, and a similar number arrived at the Villa. By February 1942, many of the Spanish refugees were being freed from the camp, and children were leaving the Villa to join them. A few were able to leave France, but many of them were being released to join work details. The newcomers to the Villa from the camp included an increasing number of German, Polish and other Western European Jews. Many of these families had fled from persecution and took refuge in France for several years before becoming entangled in the anti-Jewish laws of Vichy France, which in many respects were even more repressive than those of Germany.

Lois recognized that most of these children were traumatized by their experiences. She

**Vichy France** was France from July 1940-August 1942. Leaders collaborated with the German occupying forces in exchange for an agreement not to divide France between the Axis powers. Despite the government's pro-Nazi policies, much of the French public initially supported the new government, seeing it as necessary to maintain a degree of French autonomy and territorial integrity.—*Wikipedia* appreciated every opportunity to "add just another ray of love to the lives of these youngsters who have already experienced so much of the miseries of life." With 60 children of various ages, the Villa needed to operate on a consistent schedule, and the children had to be held to certain standards of behavior, or total chaos may have ensued. Lois' approach in resolving conflict between the children was to talk with them and encourage them so they would find their stay at the Villa much more enjoyable if they changed their behavior. She prayed, "May I show the kindness and gentleness to the children they do not get from others."

**By early July 1942**, the Vichy government agreed to deliver for deportation up to 50,000 Jews. Those already in camps in unoccupied Vichy France, such as Rivesaltes, were deported to Drancy, a transit camp in Occupied France. From Drancy, they were deported to Auschwitz.

Mary Elmes visited Lois at the Villa on Aug. 9, 1942. Lois wrote, "Mary informed me about return of Polish and German Jews to Poland, where death by starvation awaits them." In the deportations of August, September and early October 1942, if children under the age of 16 were not in the camps with a parent, they often weren't searched out, particularly if French officials knew they could already meet their quota for the scheduled transports. Lois now understood the importance of moving as many Jewish children out of the camps and into the Villa as possible.

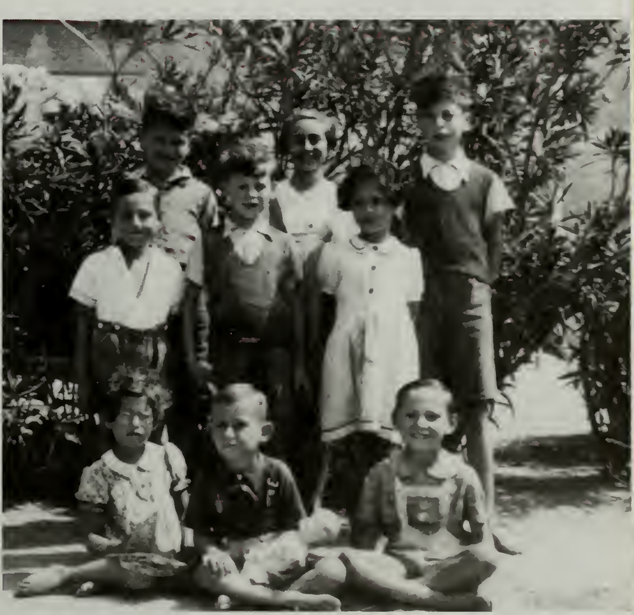
Relief agencies working with AFSC had been allowed to continue working in France as long as they remained neutral and followed French law. Individual workers like Lois and Mary Elmes had to make difficult decisions. To obviously flaunt the law would render them unable to help anyone. But to release these children in the absence of duress was something they both found unconscionable.

The OSE (Œuvre de Sécourse aux Enfants), a French Jewish child-welfare organization, was by this time operating clandestinely. They were able to move children out of the relief agencies' homes and camps to OSE group homes, private homes and Catholic convents, monasteries and schools that would give them shelter. What evolved was an informal operation similar to the U.S. Underground Railroad, which helped runaway slaves reach freedom.

Workers like Mary Elmes and Lois Gunden were also effective advocates with local officials for individual children and more humane treatment generally. It was the responsibility of local French officials and police to carry out the roundups and deportations; many of these officials were the same people with whom Mary and Lois had already developed working relationships. In their Department (Pyrenées-Orientales), where enthusiasm for these responsibilities was sometimes lacking, the children sheltered by their groups were often overlooked.

Throughout the year Lois spent in France, she and other relief workers operated despite many uncertainties. From the time that the United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor, there were many occasions when they were advised to consider leaving France. Diplomatic relations between the United States and Vichy France were increasingly strained. Space available on passenger ships was limited, and Clipper service was not possible. ▶

Lois now understood the importance of moving as many Jewish children out of the camps and into the Villa as possible.



The girl in the back row is Ginette Drucker Kalish, whose story is told in the Yad Vashem press release (see page 16). Georges Koltein, center of second row, gave testimony to Yad Vashem. His older brother Jacques is on Ginette's left (far right, back row). Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.

Lois became inured to the issue, noting that "if God wants me to return, he will provide a way."

**The amount of food they could acquire**, and thus their ability to operate at all, was never certain. All of Vichy France faced food shortages during the winter of 1941-42. While the summer offered fresh fruit and vegetables, the ongoing Allied blockade interrupted normal trade with North Africa; the onset of winter in 1942 was a fearful prospect. Officials that had helped refugee relief organizations obtain food staples became far less cooperative. Some of the locals expressed dismay that their children had less access to food than did refugee children.

The Nov. 8, 1942, British-American attack on French North Africa ended U.S. diplomatic relations with Vichy France. On Nov. 11, Germany took control of southern France, and Americans became unwelcome. Lois had gone to Lyon to witness the wedding of Henry Buller and Beata Rosenthal, an assistant in the MCC Lyon office. Unable to return to the Villa, Lois worked with Henry to provide an operating plan so that existing staff could continue to care for the children. The staff moved the children several months later, when German occupiers requisitioned the Villa.

Lois and the Bullers were escorted by police to Mont-Dore on Jan. 27, 1943, and held in a hotel for several weeks before their transfer to Baden-Baden, Germany, as part of the official North American Diplomatic Group. After complex negotiations for a prisoner exchange, they arrived in New York City on the *Gripsholm* on March 15, 1944. Lois resumed teaching French at Goshen College in the fall of 1944.

*Mary Jean Gunden lives in Moraga, Calif., and is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. She is a niece of Lois Gunden.*

## Yad Vashem names Lois Gunden Righteous Among the Nations

One morning while the children were out for a walk, a policeman arrived at the center in order to arrest three of the Jewish children, Louis, Armand and Monique Landesmann. Lois Gunden told the police that the children were out and would not return until noon. At noon the policeman appeared again and ordered her to pack the children's belongings and prepare them for travel. This time Gunden told him that their clothing was still being laundered and would not be dry until the late afternoon. Gunden testified that throughout that day and evening she prayed for wisdom, guidance and the safety of the three children. The officer never returned, and the children were saved. During this time, Lois Gunden kept a diary, describing in it her experiences and daily activities.

In 1958, she married a widower, Ernest Clemens. While she did not have any children of her own, Gunden gained a stepdaughter through her marriage. In addition to teaching French at Goshen College and at Temple University, she also ministered in the Mennonite Church. Lois Gunden died in 2005. On Feb. 27, Yad Vashem recognized Lois Gunden as Righteous Among the Nations.

According to Yad Vashem's website (www.yadvashem.org): "Attitudes toward the Jews during the Holocaust mostly ranged from indifference to hostility. The mainstream watched as their former neighbors were rounded up and killed; some collaborated with the perpetrators; many benefited from the expropriation of the Jews' property.

"In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the Righteous Among the Nations. They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation."

The main forms of help extended by these Righteous Gentiles were hiding Jews in the rescuers' home or on their property, providing false papers and false identities, smuggling and helping Jews escape, and the rescue of children.—*from a Yad Vashem press release*

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**What leadership positions have you held/currently hold?**
Currently I serve as pastor of Zion Mennonite Church, Donnellson, Iowa, a small, rural congregation that is, I believe, the oldest active Mennonite church west of the Mississippi River. The congregation's history predates the beginnings of the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) and was one of its founding congregations. I served as co-pastor of West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan., along with my spouse, John Yoder-Schrock. We served as family life ministers at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Neb. My first pastorate was at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind. I served on the ministerial committee of the Central District, the former Northern District and the Western District conferences and the GC Committee on the Ministry.

**Do/did you have a woman leader as a mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**
No, I did not have a woman in pastoral ministry as a mentor; there were, however, three of us first-time women pastors who met regularly with a woman leader, a "trailblazer" supporting and encouraging women in pastoral ministry. It was helpful to discuss everything from appropriate dress for preaching to finding one's voice and claiming one's role on boards and committees.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**
I am grateful for the opportunity to mentor two women who were/are beginning in pastoral ministry. Encouraging them in discovering, testing and shaping their identity as a pastor and in claiming their role as leader in a congregation has been a rich experience. Indirect mentoring has happened as young women have experienced my ministry.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**
Beginning and growing in one's role and identity as a pastor is similar then and now. One difference is that being a "pioneer" woman in pastoral ministry was a new experience for many people, whereas today many members have known or experienced a woman as pastor.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**
There have been and continue to be some congregations where women are not even considered as pastoral candidates. Even in congregations where I have served, some members have struggled to receive my ministry. Others who had questions or were resistive at the beginning eventually came to trust and affirm women in ministry.

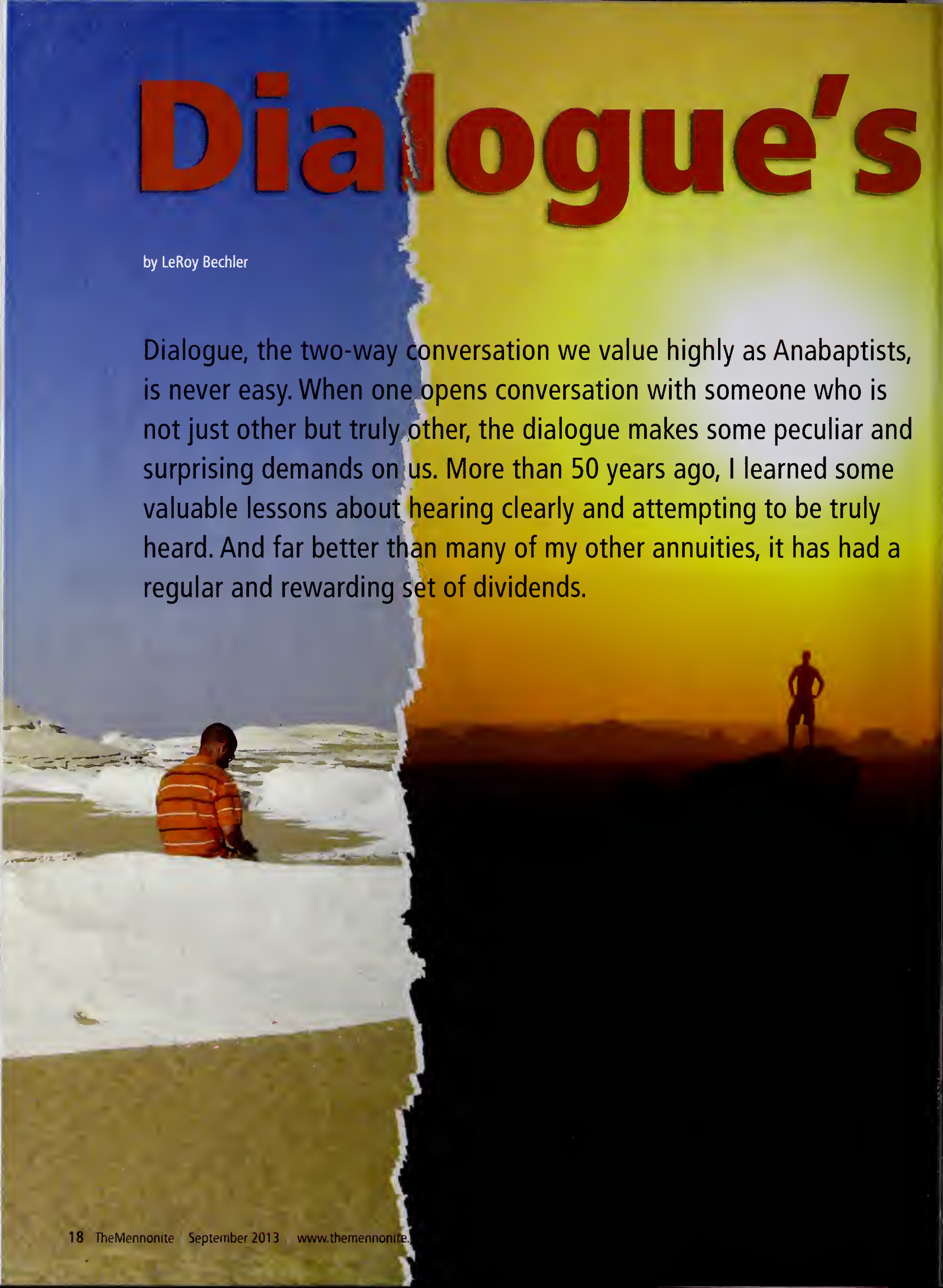
**When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?**
To be a leader is to face challenges, times when one may be discouraged or shaken. I am anchored, however, as I remember my call and ordination to pastoral ministry. God who called me is and has been faithful in all circumstances. Family, friends and pastoral colleagues are invaluable encouragement and support.

God who called me is and has been faithful in all circumstances.
—Martha Yoder-Schrock

# Dialogue's

by LeRoy Bechler

Dialogue, the two-way conversation we value highly as Anabaptists, is never easy. When one opens conversation with someone who is not just other but truly other, the dialogue makes some peculiar and surprising demands on us. More than 50 years ago, I learned some valuable lessons about hearing clearly and attempting to be truly heard. And far better than many of my other annuities, it has had a regular and rewarding set of dividends.



# demands and discoveries

## A reflection on the experience of being in dialogue with segregationist preachers 50 years ago.

The year was 1957. The place, the deep south, Atlanta and Montgomery, Ala. A sabbatical from church planting in Saginaw, Mich., allowed Irene and me to spend a school year at Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University, a "black" institution of learning, we would have said then) and learn firsthand about the racial crisis and the emerging civil rights movement.

As Christmas approached, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, in response to public charges that "the pulpits have been paralyzed" on the segregation-integration question, invited ministers of many faiths to give their views and printed one article every Sunday. I was appalled by the logic, alarmed by the hermeneutic, astounded by the effrontery of the articles and could not return to class with my fellow students without having opened conversation with these pastors.

**Martin Luther King Jr.**, an emerging leader in the civil rights movement, came from Montgomery to visit our class and talk about the boycott and his ensuing imprisonment. Later I received an invitation to visit Montgomery, have dinner with the Kings at the Ralph Abernathy home around their long dinner table and visit the Kings' parsonage. All this helped me find my voice, and I wrote my first attempt at dialogue with the author of the article "Bible Orders Separation and Love, Harwell Says."

The first reply to the newspaper's challenge came from the Rev. J. W. Harwell, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Madison, Ga.: "Let's face it. Integration is integration, whether compelled by law and military force or brought about by deception from church pulpits." Harwell claimed to examine segregation and integration fairly in the light of the Bible, where "eternal principles are clearly set forth, namely, "the principle of *love* and the principle of *separation*" (his emphasis). "The Bible does not teach the universal brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God," he argued; it teaches universal sinfulness of man, and "God does not desire for mankind in a sinful state to dwell together as one great people. He has therefore established laws of separation." He supported this with Genesis 6, on mixed relations causing the flood, and Genesis 11, on "Babel causing separation and scattering of people." He wrote: "Integration breeds lawlessness. God knew this tendency of man's depraved nature when he made his laws of separation."

I learned from our dialogue that no one changes because of biblical quotations and definition of the text's meaning.

As I reread the yellowed clipping, I recalled praying through my many feelings before writing, "If you care to engage in a friendly discussion by letter, I am sure both of us can profit."

So our conversation began. Three letters from me and three responses from him explored our differing theologies. His last letter despaired of our ever gaining anything from the other since his way of reading the Bible to find "a principle," like God-ordained separation marked by "God-created skin color," did not convince me to extend the Babel story of God the great Separator into a social design for clearly divided societies with different privileges and opportunities. My insistence on beginning with the teaching and life of Jesus seemed to have no relevance to his thinking—Jesus was about spiritual things, not social realities, and the gospel is about new birth, not a new community of disciples.

**Dialogue means finding common ground**, and I sought to affirm his concern for separation of the believer from those practicing evil, but it didn't work. It only conceded that there is a principle of separation, and thus we must obey it. I

▶

sought to find a common concern for the welfare of every person. He agreed but saw that each would fare well in separate situations. Dialogue sometimes grows as we share our own story, and so we talked of family issues, but moving it beyond into the family of God ran head on into the walls of segregation.

I learned from our dialogue that no one changes because of biblical quotations and definition of the text's meaning. Text gets answered with text, biblical quote with biblical quote, and when assumptions are made, they are called simple logical deductions. When boundaries are drawn, they are justified as self-evident, God-given natural divides. I had long known that no one changes except in relationship, and I tried to create a way to relate as brothers, but that failed as well. We were brothers in name only, in a theological sense of parallel ministers with a common language of piety, but we remained strangers and would, I feared, go on as strangers.

Only when there is a history of presence between the lines or beyond the page do we truly meet.

If we are to judge by the letters alone, we failed to touch each other's souls. Dialogue demands presence, and only when there is a history of presence between the lines or beyond the page do we truly meet.

But I was a slow learner, so a month later, when the Reverend Billy Cobb of the Dunwoody Baptist Church answered the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* challenge with his article, "Doctrine of Segregation Plainly Taught in Bible," I decided to try conversation by means of correspondence once again. Rev. Cobb was unequivocal: "All through the Bible is plainly taught the great doctrine of segregation or separation." He saw segregation of the family, of the Jews, the church and the nations as fulfillment of this sovereign principle. He quoted from Genesis 10 and 11 to tell us we dare not break these divinely instituted boundaries. One text in the New Testament, Acts 17:26, served as the final word—God has appointed "the bounds of their habitations."

"Whites, follow the plain teachings of God's Word. ... Negroes, forget and forgive ... and keep your race pure."

**This time I tried my best** to build relationship first—appealing to our common faith in Christ, our shared roots in the Bible, our love for the church and its mission. I introduced myself, expressed my commitment to be teachable, then followed with a series of carefully worded questions about equating separation from evil with segregation, how this could possibly be related, if it could be, to race? I ended warmly, and sent it off with hope of dialogue.

The long letter he returned took every sentence I had written with sincerity and sensitivity. His position wove a continuous fabric from his reading of the Scripture to the current practices of Southern life. Satan was the author of integration; God has willed the absolute separation (biblically, he said, this is the same as segregation). But he, too, ended with the same brotherly warmth I had offered him. Now here was my hoped-for chance to dialogue. So I responded by quoting the words of Jesus from the Gospel of John and Paul's word to the Ephesians, then laid out my heart for the mission of reconciliation.

I was finding it hard to talk his "separation by divine command at Babel" language. Would he find it equally hard to talk my "reconciliation as taught by Jesus and Paul" vocabulary? He did his best—nine pages of reinterpreting the texts I had offered through the lens of separation as a governing principle of Scripture interpretation. It was a heroic effort, and he ended by quoting me, "Brother Bechler, in our understanding we are 'separated by the pen and the words we use.' We are trying to arrive at an understanding of each other's position with a different meaning as to the word itself and the issues involved. I believe, could we be in harmony as to the definition of segregation, we would be closer together in our thoughts and interpretations than we realize."

He was right. If I ordered my life by his principle, his world would make complete and consistent sense; if I yielded my life to a gospel of reconciliation, it did not. So we did it again in the next interchange and came back to the same impasse. We paused for a month, then each tried once more. We had touched each other deeply, and I sincerely expressed my longing to sit and talk face to face. I spoke of how important it was to me to converse with someone who was seeking to know and obey the will of God, even when we heard the call of Jesus leading us in such different ways. Looking back, my words were a lament that we could both long for common fellowship, but we had differing visions of how to be fellows and how to climb aboard the same great ship. A sense of loss hung between us. We were reaching across a wide space, and our arms were much too short. He expressed it in a final paragraph of blessing, of benediction, with a surprising affection and brother-to-brother "koinonia" (fellowship).

**Sometimes dialogue results** in increasing mutuality; sometimes it only confirms our differences and individuality. Sometimes we must admit that the process—or the participants—fails; sometimes, to our surprise, it works. Looking back, I now recognize that those that fail may actually connect us deeply, and only God knows what the outcome of the conversation ultimately may have been.

Dialogue doesn't mean we come to agreement. It doesn't mean the common ground becomes our totally shared ground. It allows us to have separate grounds—and a no-man's land in between—but with a safe path that crosses over with no pitfalls, no landmines—to continue a troubling metaphor—a way to reach each other. Dialogue is how we work at this process of co-discerning, and even when we do not reach either unity or unanimity, Jesus is present. We want to see walls crash, separation end, gates open, bridges reach across, and on those occasions when we do experience all of the above, we celebrate. When we do not, we grieve and let go, knowing the Spirit of God is still present on both sides of this conversation about faithfulness.

*LeRoy Bechler, was a church planter of a reconciled congregation in Saginaw, Mich., a long-time pastor in Los Angeles and the conference minister for evangelism for Southeast Mennonite Conference. This article was written with a bit of encouragement and expansion by David Augsburger. The documents from the* Atlanta Journal and Constitution *and the letters in this 1957 dialogue are going to the Mennonite Archives for future readers or researchers.*

Even when we do not reach either unity or unanimity, Jesus is present.

## Mennonite urban intruders

I met LeRoy and Irene Bechler at the end of the 1950s. They had invited me to preach at the church they were serving in Saginaw, Mich. Saginaw is a strange place in itself, but put in the black community a white couple calling themselves Mennonites—ah, what an exotic presence. Baptists we know, and Methodists we know, but Mennonites? I was none of the above but was African American and could be had for the price of gasoline and a cup of coffee.

They had settled in Saginaw, and before the smoke had cleared at headquarters, they, along with a growing band, had pioneered urban ministry in key American cities. I was to preach in their company from Youngstown, Ohio, to St. Louis, from Hough in Cleveland to Watts in Los Angeles, and from Chicago's west side to sleepy but tricky St. Ann, Ill.

These disciples were not noisemakers. They did not intend to be anybody's heroes. In the late '50s, heroes were not needed in America as they are today. But they were Spirit-led intruders. They taught the gospel by listening, and they learned discipleship by listening. You can learn a lot about Jesus while braiding the hair of a youngster whose nap is different from your own.

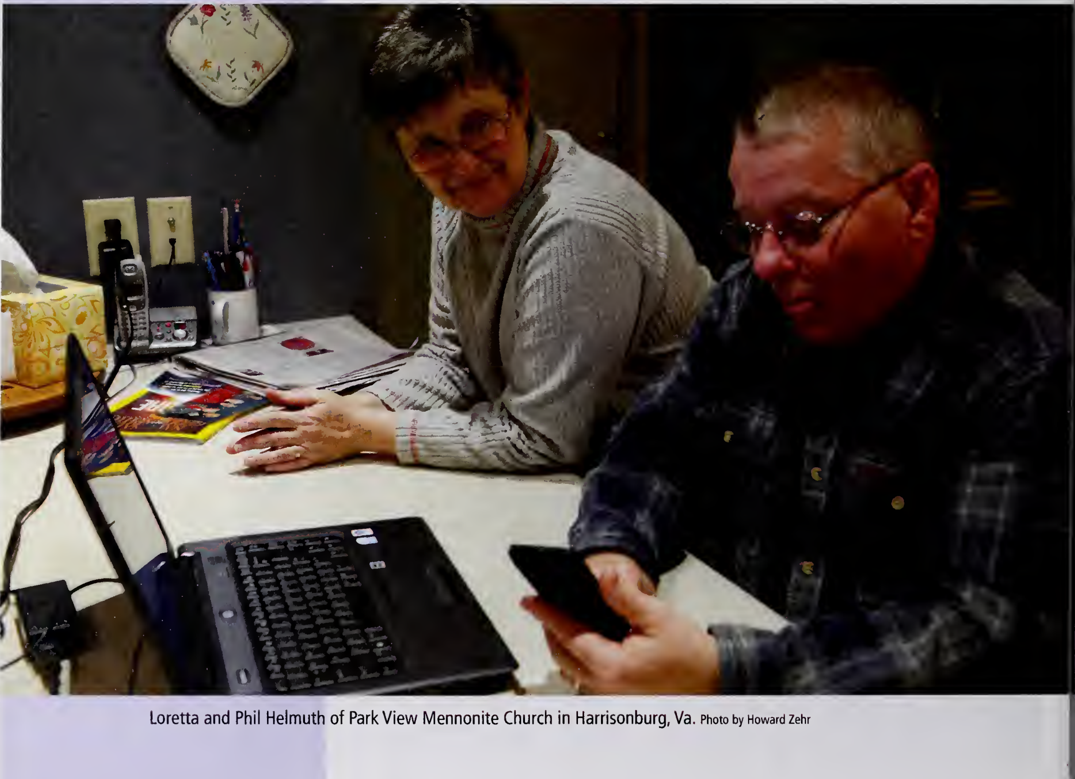
As the crow flies it is a long way from Saginaw to Atlanta. But as the Spirit moves, not really that far.—*Bill Pannell of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.*

CALLED TO
**STEWARDSHIP**

# An elder's side job

Family news took Phil and Loretta Helmuth into the future and the past at the same time. Three more grandchildren were due to arrive in March, which led Phil and Loretta to talk about striking a new balance between work and family—and its financial implications.

by Gloria Diener



Loretta and Phil Helmuth of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va. Photo by Howard Zehr

## Tough economic times lead to money mentoring by a congregation's elder.

Thinking about money and its role in life is nothing new for Phil, who was asked to serve in a newly created position of elder of financial care at his church in Harrisonburg, Va., because of his experience in financial matters and his willingness to share what he's learned.

The Helmuths' daughter, Laura, called in September 2012 to say that she and her husband, Asa, parents of a 2-year-old girl, were expecting twins. Less than a week later, daughter Annette and her husband, Trey, parents of three children younger than 7, dropped in to say they were expecting a baby.

**News of the upcoming births** reminded Phil and Loretta of the first major challenge they faced together, newly married and still in college. Loretta found out she was pregnant, two years earlier than they'd planned. They worked things out, with Phil waiting to finish college until mid-career, taking one class at a time.

Nearly 40 years later, Phil and Loretta enjoy life as nearly 60-year-old grandparents. An empty nest has offered time to bicycle, provide support for their parents and enjoy their four grandchildren when they're not at Eastern Mennonite University, where Phil is executive director of development and director of church relations, and Loretta works as secretary/receptionist at the physical plant.

"What if Laura needs to be on bed rest again during this pregnancy?" they wonder. "What if Annette's family needs additional help in March? What can we offer them?"

The process Phil is using to figure out what their decisions will mean financially is one he's become familiar with in recent years. The economic recession that started in late 2007 led Park View Mennonite Church to create the elder role in which Phil agreed to serve.

"The number of families and individuals among us facing financial crises is increasing," he remembers a member of the pastoral staff telling him. "We'd like to appoint an elder well-versed in financial matters to assist in discernment and ongoing support in these situations." Phil says he knew the question before it was asked. "Would you consider this ministry?"

The answer was yes. Phil is passionate about the ways in which spirituality and finances intermingle.

Phil is passionate about the ways spirituality and finances intermingle.

As the economy got worse, Phil became more aware of the need for financial mentoring as he listened to donors' financial concerns in his role as a fund-raiser. Many wondered whether they ever would be able to retire after their savings were depleted.

"I decided I needed to answer some financial questions for our own situation," Phil says. "I wanted to know what adjustments Loretta and I needed to make in our family budget to provide flexibility for unexpected life events."

He decided to develop a spreadsheet. "I wanted to see the numbers," he says. He looked at his income and projected to see what the numbers would look like when he and Loretta are 65. "I then did the same with savings."

Phil then came up with a retirement budget to satisfy the question of whether he and Loretta could live off the amounts on the spreadsheet. Phil's spreadsheet experience was an eye-opener, a new way of looking at life.

"In working with the spreadsheet," Phil says, "I learned exactly what our current financial situation is, and I could estimate how much we'd need if we wanted to retire."

As elder of financial care, Phil invites people who seek his help to share their financial situations. For many people, the invitation demands something extremely difficult—laying bare the financial burdens they carry.

Chris and Beth (not their real names), a couple in their early 30s who are active members of PVMC, had been married for 10 years when they realized they were headed for a financial crisis they couldn't handle.

"The worst thing was the secrecy," Beth says now. "Money had such power over us, and our lives were filled with so much shame and disappointment."

> The thing I love most about my role is the opportunity to provide a voice of hope in the midst of despair.—Phil Helmuth

Several unexpected events in their lives were compounded by a few decisions that turned sour. Beth and Chris fell into a pattern of trying to hide their financial problems from everyone, even from each other.

"We'd quit talking about finances," Chris says. "It just wasn't worth the fights, the blame and shame those conversations inevitably elicited."

By the time they agreed to meet with Phil, they realized they needed someone to help them talk through finances in the same way some couples need a marriage counselor.

Phil is clear about his role—he explores with people their individual situations and identifies resources so they can make healthy decisions. He relies on using the spreadsheet, simple and clear. Another tool he's used is counseling provided by LSS Financial Counseling Services through Everence.

For Beth and Chris, the confidential, anonymous LSS counseling via telephone—along with Phil's help—changed their lives.

"I'd kept hoping for something miraculous, a couple thousand dollars," Chris says with a smile. "But I realize now [that] winning the lottery wouldn't have made a difference in our lives. We needed something deeper than a miracle."

Phil offered them suggestions for planning ahead and for budgeting, then ways to convert these concepts into day-to-day practices.

"He made himself available to us in a nonjudgmental and caring way, which made it possible for us to communicate with each other," Beth says. "He offered hope and affirmation where there was none."

"Working with both LSS and Phil has been a bit like having cheerleaders," Chris says. "They've been supportive, sending us notes, offering prayers on our behalf and checking in to see how we're doing."

Beth smiles as she sets aside the past to focus on the present.

"Living with accountability hasn't been easy," she says, "but we've made so much progress." They're now in the process of closing on their first house, their debt-to-income ratio looks good, and their credit rating is solid.

As Phil reflects on the couple's progress, he says, "The thing I love most about my role is the opportunity to provide a voice of hope in the midst of despair."

This is the miracle.

*Gloria Diener of Harrisonburg, Va., attends Park View Mennonite Church, where she serves on the elder team with Phil.*

## Your financial questions

Have concerns about your financial situation? You can receive free telephone consultation through LSS Financial Counseling, a benefit from Everence. If you have questions about your more significant financial issues, like retirement savings, contact an Everence representative or visit Everence.com where you will find retirement and savings calculators as well as worksheets.

**Basic questions**

LSS can help with budgeting, debt issues and your basic financial questions from loans to creditworthiness. To use this service, call toll-free 877-809-0039, or for Spanish-speaking phone counselors, call 855-292-0131. You can also learn more about LSS at Everence.com.

**Larger questions**

Everence advisers can help you with larger financial questions, such as long-term financial goals, retirement savings and other questions about your financial security in the future. Contact your Everence representative at your local Everence office or find a representative at Everence.com or by calling 800-348-7468.

**Your congregation's elder role**

Phil's role, as an elder for financial matters, may be useful in your congregation to help people on a whole range of financial issues.—*Everence*

CALLED TO
**STEWARDSHIP**

Stewardship isn't the most important aspect of our faith, but it is way too important to ignore.

# Mutual aid and generosity

In my talks with pastors and lay leaders, I note there is not one life transition or challenge that comes without a financial component:

- starting a business costs money
- getting married costs money
- having a child costs money
- going to college costs money
- receiving medical care costs money
- even dying costs money, and the list goes on.

"An Elder's Side Job" (page 22) is a wonderful example of how one congregation recognizes that the financial needs and resources of its people are part of the spiritual ministry of the body.

The early church recognized this connection between our faith and our finances. In Romans 15:25b-29, the Apostle Paul says as much: "I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. So when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain."

**Such mutual care and aid** modeled by the church in the first century was not lost to the early Anabaptists as they read Scripture and made applications for their lives. Menno Simons wrote: "True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded."

Article 21 of *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says, "As stewards of money and possessions, we are to live simply, practice mutual aid within the church, uphold economic justice and give generously and cheerfully." As the stewardship arm of Mennonite Church USA, Everence promotes this emphasis, which has been in place since its founding as MMA in 1945.

The Everence Strategic Plan 2012-2013 states that we are committed to help people

- make financial decisions that include mutual aid and compassionate sharing,
- leverage resources to meet identified needs,
- become equipped to face economic challenges that arise and to respond with generosity when those challenges affect others.

Paul wasn't the first follower of the Way to pick up on this idea of caring for the physical needs of others as part of our spiritual responsibility. In Acts 2, the early group of believers come together to form Christ's body on earth. The Holy Spirit shows up accompanied by a sound like the rush of a mighty wind, divided tongues as of fire and many who began speaking other languages. Too often we stop here. But in Acts 2:44 is a fourth manifestation of the Holy Spirit: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need."

It's easy for us to get excited about the Holy Spirit doing something around us that creates a spectacle of sorts, but when the Spirit does something within us that transforms our hearts and our way of relating, that's truly amazing. It has been suggested that stewardship is everything you do after you say you believe. Whether we are talking about stewardship of our time or skills or money, how we use these God-given resources says a lot about our faith in God, our worldview and our ultimate sense of ownership.

How we use these God-given resources says a lot about our faith in God, our worldview and our ultimate sense of ownership.

Jan. 19, 2014, is Stewardship Sunday, and we encourage people to begin planning now to give special attention to this theme that day. Maybe the Scripture texts identified here will help inform planning. It may be a time to examine the way we respond to the needs of those within our congregation and our community.

Is it time to consider identifying an elder of finance who provides financial counseling as well as benevolence assistance?

*Beryl Jantzi is the Everence Stewardship Education Director and a former pastor of several Mennonite congregations.*

### My struggle with unwanted same-sex attraction

# Like a man

by Anonymous

When I failed to do something to his specifications, my father shot at me the instructive, critical words, "Do it like a man." This registered in my tender heart as, "I'm not pleasing to him. I'm not good enough. There's something wrong with me. Do I have what it takes to be a man?"

My parents struggled to know what to do when at an early age I asked for a doll and a petticoat for Christmas. Though embarrassed, they conceded to my request because they were advised that if they didn't make a big deal about it, these odd and unnatural things would go away more quickly.

When and how did I become aware of my same-sex attraction, this thing that seemed to rise up from somewhere deep within? I don't remember a time it didn't exist. Young boys come to an understanding of their sexuality at different times and in various ways, and as I became aware of mine, I knew I was "different." I preferred playing house to playing baseball. When the other boys joked about girls and their bodies, there was no allure or fascination for me. I felt safe when I was with the girls, and I identified with their interests. I felt like I belonged when I was with them.

One day, when I was in my early teens, I asked my father what the word "homosexual" meant. I had some idea, but his awkward response was something like, "Uh, those people are sick. It's awful. I didn't know about that stuff until I was 23. It's when men, well," and he stumbled through a brief explanation.

**Little did he know** that I was already sexually active with a male friend from church and was struggling to make sense of it all. I needed guidance in understanding and processing my shaky sexual identity; I needed to find a safe place to talk; I needed to find refuge for my troubled heart. My father was simply not able to go there with me, and I took on a lot of shame that day.

Sometime later, I said spontaneously to my friend, "You're a homosexual." He retorted, "You are, too." That accusation pierced me and became a weapon the enemy has used to attack my personal and sexual identity for years. It became a fundamental part of how I thought of myself. Is this my identity? Am I hardwired this way? Is this who I really am?

I know my father loved me. He was a devout Christian man who provided well for our family and did the best he could to train and discipline his children. But he was emotionally absent from me and unable to connect with me in the ways I needed him. My brothers were more athletic than I, and somehow I didn't fit into my father's idea of normal, acceptable and masculine. He was critical of my sensitivity and could not identify with this son who would rather read a book than go fishing and rather take art lessons than learn to pass a football.

I was always more closely connected with my mom than with my dad. She seemed to understand me better, which created a natural bond between us. We did many activities together, and I felt she cared much more about me. Even though nothing overtly inappropriate ever happened between us, we were likely more emotionally tied to each other than what was healthy for either of us. In spite of her insecurities, she was more of a leader in our home than my dad; at times her influence bordered on dominance and manipulation.

Now I'm a grown man. I'm a graduate of one of our Mennonite colleges and am happily married to a godly Christian woman. We have children and grandchildren whom I dearly love. My wife and I are active members in our congregation, yet my struggle with this unwanted same-sex attraction persists.

Though I have prayed fervently again and again for the Lord to take these strong urges and relentless desires away from me, I have not found complete release from them.

**I gave full disclosure of this struggle** to my wife before we were married. Being a private person, it has been difficult for me to discuss this openly, since it makes me feel exposed and vulnerable. My wonderful wife has never been anything other than loving and supportive of me, even though she can't begin to identify with or understand what this is all about. I try to be open to discuss her questions and fears because I know this is on her mind a lot and is painful for her. Even though we don't dwell on this on a regular basis, we carry the weight of it together.

I've been in counseling for many years. My insightful and compassionate counselor has been tremendously helpful in helping me understand, sort out, make some sense of and deal with what is happening inside me. In addition to counseling, I've done a lot of reading and attended several seminars on homosexuality. The Lord has granted me great release from the guilt and shame I have carried over the years, but though I have prayed fervently again and again for the Lord to take these strong urges and relentless desires away from me, I have not found complete release from them.

Whether homosexuality has genetic, psychological, experiential, emotional and/or spiritual roots, I don't believe it is God's intent or design. Neither ▶

is blindness, schizophrenia, depression, alcoholism, demonic oppression, or feelings of inferiority. While these are not part of God's perfect plan, they are realities with which many of us need to live.

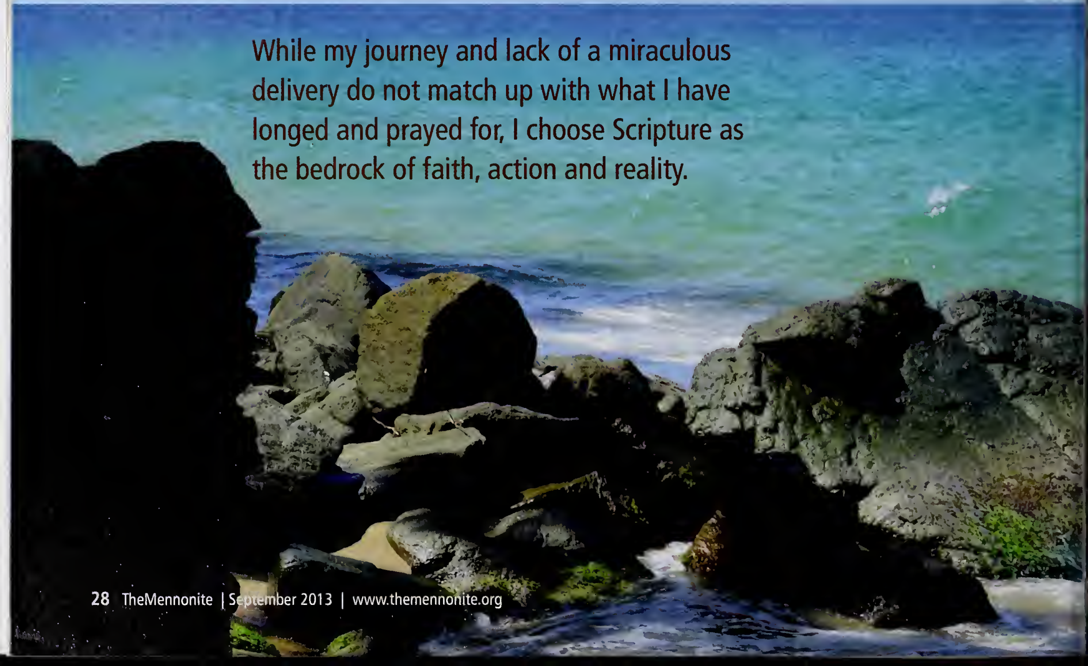
**I have come to understand** that my sexual orientation is not the defining characteristic of my identity. My core identity is rooted in Jesus Christ, and I am a child of God. I am not first of all a homosexual who happens to be a Christian; I am a Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction.

At some point, we each need to decide who or what is going to be the source of authority in our life. Will it be Scripture, the traditions of the church, science or personal experience? While my journey and lack of a miraculous delivery do not match up with what I have longed and prayed for, I choose Scripture as the bedrock of faith, action and reality. I believe it is God's plan for one man and one woman to live together in the mystical union we call marriage. I believe that this is what the Bible teaches, and I have chosen to act upon it, difficult though it is for me at times. I need to choose daily to remain faithful to my wife and to the conviction that God's intent and desire for me does not include living my life as a practicing homosexual.

In addition to my wife and counselor, I have several dear friends, straight men, who know about my struggle and who provide understanding, warm acceptance and continuous prayer backing. The love and support from these people and the great mercy of God have helped me not to compromise the life and moral standards I believe God is asking me to pursue. They have helped build my resolve to stay the course. Some days I feel vulnerable and find myself closer to the edge than I wish I were, so when I hear of a Christian who has "fallen," I bow my head and ask for strength. That could so easily have been me.

As I look back over my life, I realize I have grown and changed in many ways. I know that I have more hope for the future than I did 10 years ago. I'm learning to be more confident as a person, more willing to share my struggles with others, more open to challenge and growth and more dependent on God for healing and hope. I have not yet mastered the art of letting God meet all my needs and fill all my longings; neither have I figured out how to calm the storm that rages in my soul or ease the pain and loneliness I sometimes feel. But I choose to submit to God, to be obedient to my understanding of his Word, to hunger and thirst after righteousness and to turn from despair and hopelessness. I choose to strive toward holiness.

**This struggle, to my surprise**, has become a pathway to intimacy with God and has become a compelling force that has driven me closer to him. The emotional absence of my biological father has propelled me on a relentless course of pursuing



While my journey and lack of a miraculous delivery do not match up with what I have longed and prayed for, I choose Scripture as the bedrock of faith, action and reality.

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# AMBS window

## I THANK GOD FOR THIS COMMUNITY

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

When was the last time singing was so stupendously beautiful, you couldn't sit still for the rapture? How often do you get to join an enormous high-school graduation party at AMBS for the all-star athlete—with nine varsity letters—son of a co-worker?

When did your eyes well up because a spiritual director unlocked a profound truth in your life?

When have you gathered to salute a volunteer for more than 2000 hours he's freely given over nine years to transform the campus into a verdant, blooming garden spot? How often do you visit a colleague's home to party in celebration of another colleague's winning the John Randall Hunt award for outstanding doctor of ministry thesis?

When did you last bounce from side-splitting laughter one minute to tears of disbelief the next at the goodness of shared work when saying thank you to colleagues for years of service? Or host a dozen retreat participants arriving at your home for lunch by canoes on the Elkhart River?

The threads from these recent events all connect to experiences I have had this spring at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, a beloved community of learning centered in Elkhart, Indiana.

Studying with this community is now possible even for people who don't move to Elkhart. What's new is that you have a choice—to study in community on campus, or to study in your own context while connecting to AMBS through short visits and online. Now you can live almost anywhere and get a top notch Anabaptist education.

And more than that, responding to many requests, we've launched an online series of Anabaptist Short Courses for professionals, teachers, pastors needing refresher courses, new Mennonite pastors … anyone who's interested. They're quickly filling up beyond what we can accommodate.

We recently said farewell to 19 graduates. Approximate quotes from several put it this way at the dean's graduation breakfast:

- I'm blown away with the depth of learning and spiritual maturity of the faculty.
- I underestimated how much I would grow.
- I can't believe the wealth of amazing teachers I had here—at least 22.
- The faculty taught me to ask the right questions, and to follow in the good way of Christ.
- The faculty holds together great intellect with humility and humor.
- This community is spiritually and emotionally healthy—and so hospitable.

I thank God for this dynamic learning community—both on campus and connecting from around the world—working every day to educate leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. •

AMBS Window is a publication of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary • www.ambs.edu

## 2013 GRADUATES

# Nineteen graduates honored

Nineteen graduates were honored at the AMBS commencement service on May 25, 2013. They received the following degrees and certificates:

| | |
|---|---|
| *MDiv* | *Master of Divinity* |
| *MAPS* | *Master of Arts: Peace Studies* |
| *MATS* | *Master of Arts: Theological Studies* |
| *CERT* | *Certificate in Theological Studies* |

**Getu Haile Abiche** *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies.* Returned to Ethiopia where he oversees more than 50 congregations and teaches at Meserete Kristos College.

**Janie Beck Kreider** *MDiv with a concentration in theology and ethics.* Working with Merry Lea Environmental Center and Mennonite Creation Care Network. Janie and Luke, her husband, attend Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen. She is a member of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

**Charles Bontrager** *MDiv with a concentration in theology and ethics.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. Charles is a member of Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

**Deborah-Ruth Mercedes Ferber** *Certificate in Theological Studies.* Will work at L'Arche Daybreak, Richmond Hill, Ont. Deborah is the daughter of Rudy and Pauline Ferber of Windsor, Ont.

**Wesley Goertzen** *MDiv with a concentration in biblical studies.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. Wes is married to Heather Goertzen and they are expecting their first child. He is a member of Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Neb., and First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, Kan.

**Jacob Hess** *MAPS.* Jake and Elya, his wife, have one child. He is pursuing a Mennonite Central Committee assignment as a mediator or peace and justice educator, and will help Elya complete a master's degree.

**Leslie Homer-Cattell** *MDiv with a concentration in pastoral care and counseling.* Leslie will be a Clinical Pastoral Education resident at Lancaster (Pa.) General Hospital. Leslie is married to Dave Cattell and they have three adult daughters. She is a member of Frazer Mennonite Church, Frazer, Pa.

**Janie Beck Kreider, Charles Bontrager, Deborah-Ruth Ferber, Wes Goertzen.** Not pictured: **Getu Abiche**

**Heidi King** *MDiv.* Pursuing administrative ministry. Heidi is a member of Hudson Lake Mennonite Church, New Carlisle, Ind.

**Lane Miller** *MDiv with a concentration in biblical studies.* Anticipates pastoral and teaching work in multicultural church contexts. Lane is a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., and is originally from Danvers, Ill.

**Roderick Miller** *MDiv.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment or work in spiritual formation. Rod and Melanie have two daughters. He is a member of Sharon Mennonite Church, Plain City, Ohio, and during seminary studies has attended Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Jacob Hess receives his diploma and a brass bell from AMBS President Sara Wenger Shenk.

Leslie Homer-Cattell, Heidi King, Rod Miller, Lane Miller.

## 2013 GRADUATES

**Sharon Brugger Norton** *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies.* Will continue work with Mennonite Mission Network. Sharon and Steve, her husband, are members of Goshen City Church of the Brethren. They have three children.

**Lee Pfahler** *MDiv with a concentration in pastoral care and counseling.* Will enter Clinical Pastoral Education at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne, Ind. Lee and Karen, his wife, have two children and they are members of Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Ashlee Pierson** *MDiv.* Pursuing social work and pastoral ministry assignments. She also received a Master of Social Work in a dual-degree program with Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. Ashlee is a member of Kingdom Impact, Elkhart.

**Ben Rheinheimer** *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies.* Ben and Julie, his wife, have two children. They are members of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Cristina Rodriguez** *MAPS.* Considering graduate school in health, immigration and the relationship between science and positive peace. Cristina is married to Marc Blough. She is a member of Iglesia Iñaquito Quito in Ecuador.

**Elisabeth (Libby) Richer Smith** *MDiv.* Working at a community mental health agency as a child/adolescent therapist. She also earned a Master of Social Work from Andrews University in 2012. She and Atlee Schrock were married on June 1. She is a member of First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa, and attends Pittsburgh Mennonite Church.

**Blake Stevens** *MATS with a concentration in church history.*

**Douglas Unrau** *MDiv.* Will become pastor of Lowe Farm Mennonite Church in Lowe Farm, Man. He is a member of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alberta.

**Caleb Yoder** *MDiv with a concentration in biblical studies.* Will serve in Ecuador with Mennonite Mission Network, teaching with a theological education program and doing pastoral accompaniment with a small house church. Caleb is a member of West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa. ●

**Sharon Brugger Norton, Lee Pfahler, Ben Rheinheimer, Cristina Rodriguez.**

Ashlee Pierson was one of two graduates who completed a dual-degree program that combines an AMBS degree with the Master of Social Work from nearby Andrews University. Both Ashlee and Libby Richer Smith earned a Master of Divinity from AMBS along with the MSW to prepare them for work as therapists.

Ashlee completed both degrees this year and is pursuing options in counseling, therapy and pastoral ministry. Libby completed the MSW in 2012 and the MDiv this year and is working as a child therapist.

Libby Richer Smith, Blake Stevens, Doug Unrau, Caleb Yoder

# FACULTY GIVES AWARDS TO GRADUATES

AMBS faculty select graduates to receive special awards and present these at the Dean's Breakfast the day before commencement. Awards include subscriptions to journals, gift certificates at the Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore and registration at future Church Leadership Center events. This year's recipients are:

- **Cristina Rodriguez Blough:** Award for excellence in peace studies
- **Lane Miller:** Award for excellence in theological studies
- **Jake Hess:** Award for excellence in peace studies
- **Heidi King:** Award for excellence in missional leadership
- **Leslie Homer-Cattell:** Award for excellence in pastoral care
- **Ben Rheinheimer:** Award for excellence in preaching
- **Doug Unrau:** Award for excellence in Christian formation
- **Wes Goertzen:** Willard M. Swartley award for excellence in biblical interpretation
- **Sharon Brugger Norton:** Perry B. Yoder award for excellence in Hebrew exegesis
- **Caleb Yoder:** Gertruce Roten award for excellence in Greek exegesis ●

AMBS
Douglas F. Unrau

**Doug Unrau receives an award of excellence in Christian formation from Andy Brubacher Kaethler, assistant professor of Christian formation and culture. Awards are given each year by faculty to outstanding students in different fields of study.**

AMBS Window
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# ALUMNI NEWS

**Alissa Bender (Master of Divinity 2007)** was ordained April 28 at Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

**Titus Oyeyemi (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2004)** has written and published *Equipping the New African Peacebuilder: A Peacebuilder's Curriculum* (2012). The book, available from Evangel Press, presents a multi-faceted peace curriculum, analyzing the history of Africa.

**Gary Yamasaki (Master of Divinity 1988)** has recently published *Perspective Criticism: Point of View and Evaluative Guidance in Biblical Narrative* (Wipf & Stock, 2012) which sets out a new approach he has developed for interpreting the stories of the Bible.

**Chris Marshall (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 1996)** introduced his newest book, *Compassionate Justice: An Inter-disciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice,* at AMBS on March 12.

**Charles Geiser (Master of Divinity 2010)** was ordained at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, May 26. ●

# SPEAK IN THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE, GRADUATES TOLD

Scripture was read in Greek and English, but graduates were challenged to speak in the language of love at the commencement service, Saturday, May 25, at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Lydia Neufeld Harder, Th.D., used I Corinthians 13 as the foundation for her address, asking how graduates can share the message entrusted to them without becoming a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. She used a metaphor from theologian Walter Brueggemann to recommend that graduates learn to be bilingual, speaking different languages in different conversations.

Graduates have immersed themselves in the language of their faith community, knowing its power to shape them into disciples of Christ, Lydia said. Now, as they move into different communities—in a new profession or new school, or continuing in ministry with a new status as a graduate—she asked, "What language do they borrow for the conversation beyond their spiritual home?

"How can you share what you have learned in the context of the many competing voices in our society today? What language will you use in the many conversations you will have as you move into communities foreign to your way of thinking?"

The pastor and former director of Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre answered the question from her own experience: "What I have gradually learned is that the language of love transcends differences … because it urges us to listen." Lydia challenged graduates to listen deeply and respectfully in the communities where they will serve. "The language of love creates mutual learning and true exchange of wisdom and insight," she emphasized.

**Lydia Harder, commencement speaker, encouraged graduates to use the language of love as they move into different communities, because it is the langauge of love that creates bridges between people and creates mutual learning and true exchange of wisdom and insight.**

Lydia earned her Th.D. from Emmanuel College at the Toronto School of Theology. She has taught at several institutions, including Conrad Grebel University College and Toronto School of Theology and schools in Paraguay and Egypt. She participated in the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) International Peace Committee and was involved in the theological dialogues between the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute and Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, visiting Iran two times. Currently she and Gary, her husband, serve as transitional pastors. ●

# YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

AMBS faculty members are often called by congregations, conferences and area churches to preach and lecture. Sometimes they are called to other parts of the world to teach. For example, Daniel Schipani (right) recently taught two courses on "Practical Theology—Formation and Transformation Processes" at the Seminario Evangélico de Teología, in Matanzas, Republic of Cuba. And five faculty members—Loren Johns, Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Allan Rudy-Froese, Rachel Miller Jacobs and David Miller—presented 10 workshops at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix in early July.

Your gifts support faculty not only in the classrooms at AMBS, but also in the many ways they share their scholarship through writing, publishing, speaking and leading retreats and workshops. Thank you. ●

# PANORAMA

**The 2013 graduating class gift is a peace pole for the AMBS campus. Cristina Rodriguez (center) and Ben Rheinheimer presented a small replica of it to Sara Wenger Shenk at the Commissioning service on May 24. Celebrating with Cristina at the conclusion of the Commissioning service are Blake Stevens, Sharon Norton, Leslie Homer-Cattell and Libby Smith. Each graduate received a personal blessing and the service closed with a congregational blessing as they lit candles.**

### Anabaptist Short Courses

Fall Anabaptist Short Courses—non-credit, online courses—begin with the new school year:

- Engaging John Howard Yoder's Theology Today, led by Gayle Gerber Koontz, Sept 11–Oct 22, 2013
- Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible, led by Perry Yoder, Oct 23–Dec 3

More information at **www.ambs.edu/anabaptistshortcourses**

### Webinars and workshops

For news of new offerings for the 2013–14 year, visit **www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter**.

### Faculty opening

AMBS is seeking a professor of Peace Studies and Christian Social Ethics. Qualifications include a PhD, cross-cultural experience and passion for the centrality of peace and justice in the Gospel. See more at **www.ambs.edu/about/Job-openings.cfm.** ●

# ALUMNI RECOGNITION 2013

**Kathy Bergen** of Ramallah in Israel-Palestine and **Marty Troyer** of Houston, Texas, span a breadth of ministries related to peace as AMBS honors them in this year's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition.

Kathy and Marty will visit the AMBS campus this fall, giving the seminary community opportunities to hear about their ministries and what sustains them for their work.

Kathy's 30 years of ministry have been in and for Israel-Palestine. Just after she graduated in 1982 she accepted an assignment with Mennonite Central Committee and spent eight years involved in local Palestinian Christian and Muslim communities and the Israeli peace movement. Then Kathy moved to Geneva, Switzerland, and directed the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine. Since 1991, she has been affiliated with the Friends denomination, first in Philadelphia, Pa., with the American Friends Service Committee and since 2006 with the Friends International Center in Ramallah. This summer, she anticipates returning to Canada.

Marty has been pastor of the Houston (Texas) Mennonite Church: The Church of the Sermon on the Mount since he earned a Master of Divinity 2008. Marty's ministries of writing and working for peace began when he was a student at Wheaton College and continued when he served as associate pastor in two congregations: Lebanon (Ore.) Mennonite Church and Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.

At Houston Mennonite Church, the focus on faith formation and spiritual disciplines led Marty into a local missional faith formation community called FaithWalking, and he is now a trained group facilitator. Two years ago he launched "The Peace Pastor" blog for *The Houston Chronicle* (blog.chron.com/thepeacepastor/). Marty emphasizes that the story is not in what is written or the number of readers, but in the face-to-face relationships the blog has fostered. These are "relationships that are multi-faith, ecumenical, connecting evangelical Christians with justice groups." ●

my heavenly Father. Through this valley of darkness I have become more sensitive to the pain and loneliness of others. I believe God can use our struggles and brokenness to help us be more pliable in his hands, more understanding and forgiving of the sins and addictions of others, more humble and more dependent on him.

Many books and articles have been written on the subject of same-sex attraction. Some of these promote the perspective that since the Bible declares homosexuality a "sin" and an "abomination," those who struggle with same-sex attraction need to repent, turn from their sin and be forgiven and healed. Period. I find this simple solution leaves me feeling empty, unacceptable, cold and misunderstood. I have repented; I have asked for forgiveness. And yet I struggle.

There are also many in the church who have promoted the perspective that God has created some people with same-sex attraction, that this is normal and good and should therefore be embraced and celebrated. We are being asked not only to accept actively gay people into full membership in the body of Christ but to embrace them as leaders in our churches.

I submit that we as a body of believers follow a loving, gentle, middle path as an alternative to the two sharply contrasting perspectives described above. We need grace and truth; we need compassion and principles. How does one discount the biblical teachings on human sexuality and sexual purity? I have come to believe that same-sex attraction in itself is not a sin, but the acting out of that temptation is a sin.

Since the tendency to live outside biblical boundaries is common to us all, let's surround one another with love and mutual accountability. And let's be a church community that responds with grace and mercy rather than judgment and condemnation to those who find themselves struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.

Do I struggle? Yes. Have I made some progress? Yes. Is there any hope for people like me? Absolutely. Do I believe God can still receive honor and glory through my life and my experiences? As I yield to Him, yes.

Dear Father, I pray, help me understand what it means to live "like a man," to be the person you have called me to be, using the gifts and strengths you have given me, to love my wife and family, to serve the church and community, to continue to grow through struggle and to live up to the commitments I have made with faithfulness, integrity and purity. Help me to finish well. Amen.

*Some minor details of this story have been altered to protect the anonymity of the author. He and his wife are active members of a Mennonite Church USA congregation.*

Let's be a church community that responds with grace and mercy rather than judgment and condemnation to those who find themselves struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.

# Jesus challenges the stones in our hearts

**Patricia Shelly** is moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA and professor of Bible and religion at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.

John 8:1-11 poses a question about stoning, but there aren't any real stones in the story. It is easy to imagine that the scribes and Pharisees are clenching stones in their hands when they bring this unnamed woman to Jesus, but the text doesn't tell us that. Neither does it tell us that, after Jesus' response, they dropped their stones as they walked away.

Jesus' adversaries aren't interested in an actual stoning; they are not even really concerned for this unnamed woman, whom they drag before Jesus and into the public eye. They only want to use her as a prop in their debate about the Torah (John 8:6).

This is really a conflict story that poses a Torah-test for Jesus: a question of how to interpret and apply Scripture. Like other "Torah-tests" in the Gospels (cf. Mark 12, Matthew 21-22), Jesus' critics pose a question that invites one of two polarizing answers, either of which would leave Jesus in a difficult position.

Here, Jesus' interlocutors are asking him to interpret the Torah command concerning stoning (Deuteronomy 22:21-27). They aren't really interested in the details of the case: They don't bring both parties in the adulterous act or witnesses, as the Torah requires (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). They push Jesus to rush to judgment in hopes of charging him—not the woman.

**The dilemma for Jesus is clear:** If he upholds the Torah rule, he not only endorses the death penalty but offends the Roman governor, who claimed the right to judge in capital cases himself. If he criticizes the Torah sentence, he has set himself against Moses and invited criticism from his community.

Jesus does something he is described as doing nowhere else in the Gospels: he bends down and writes on the ground—leaving his breathless opponents and the trapped woman standing above him. The story doesn't tell us what he writes, but that hasn't stopped interpreters from speculating.

Jesus refuses to let his challengers control the situation; he has shifted the focus from the woman to himself—giving her space to breathe and perhaps reclaim her humanity in the face of those manipulating her.

He stands and speaks a short proverb, "Let the one without sin throw the first stone." Again, he bends down and continues writing on the ground.

Jesus has refused to answer the question the way his challengers posed it. He has deflected the call to pronounce a death sentence by inviting the questioners to examine their own hearts. The question-posers walk away, one by one.

When Jesus looks up again, he addresses the accused woman for the first time, not as a foil but as a human being. Jesus does not condemn the woman but points her toward a new beginning. He says, "Go and do not sin again."

Jesus has addressed both the woman and her accusers in ways that challenge and extend mercy. His invitations to them sharpen the issue for us.

**Our tendency in hearing this story** may be to judge the scribes and Pharisees for manipulating the woman into the conflict and bringing this question to Jesus in the first place. But this is a judgment story where Jesus challenges our human claims to pass judgment, so we have to be careful. We may want to condemn these critics of Jesus. But in doing so, we discover that the proverb applies to us as well.

Jesus doesn't speak a harsh or condemning word in this story. He doesn't condemn the woman or his inquisitors. Jesus' response is a patient but studied silence and a provocative proverb that subverts their own smugness—but also invites them to engage a broader perspective.

This image of Jesus kneeling on the ground seems very much the servant pose, reminiscent of the later scene in John 13, where Jesus washes the disciples' feet. Here is Jesus—in the middle of a conflict—bending to write on the ground, a servant to his adversaries and to their victim, even as he speaks the truth in love.

What are the stones we need to scatter and drop from our hands and hearts? Where are the stony places in our hearts and in our congregational life that need to be melted and restored as healthy arteries, as channels of healing and hope? Indeed John 8 is a call not to gather stones, but to scatter them in the ocean-depth of God's mercy and divine compassion.

This story reminds us that we participate in God's grace when we deal graciously with each other—even in the midst of conflict. We follow the pattern of grace embodied in Jesus. As Colossians puts it, "If anyone has a complaint against another, forgiving one another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (3:13). TM

> Here is Jesus—in the middle of a conflict—bending to write on the ground, a servant to his adversaries and to their victim, even as he speaks the truth in love.

# Sustainable simplification shuns 'shoulds'

Over the years, many people have expressed to me an intention to simplify their lives. In nearly every case, those intentions appeared to be grounded in either a litany of "shoulds" or a reluctant resignation to making a sacrifice. In my experience, neither impetus is sustainable.

Guilt has always struck me as a useless emotion. It does nothing to help the person or situation we're feeling guilty about, and it makes us feel miserable. Acting proactively to preclude guilt benefits others and avoids misery for the one who acts. When I hear someone say "should," I flinch, sensing that the words that follow evince a reluctance in that person's spirit for the action being considered. In most cases, either dithering postpones the action or a withering spirit saps the verve of the well-intentioned soul. In both instances, a long-term sustainability is lacking.

**When I speak to groups** about downward mobility, someone usually commends me for my willingness to sacrifice. Once again, I flinch. It's no sacrifice to eschew something you never wanted in the first place. Unless one's heart embraces a simpler lifestyle, it will not be sustainable. And unless we're religious flagellants, our hearts won't desire simplicity as long as we consider it a sacrifice. On occasion, I sense a willingness by some to engage in temporary sacrifice to buy time, e.g., to ride a bicycle until a "smart," clean car is invented. I put no faith in technological fixes, since each new technology ratchets up global wealth disparities and is nearly always less environmentally sustainable than the one it replaced. "Smart" devices usually result in increased use of the item by its owners, who now feel less guilt over using it, thus canceling out any anticipated environmental improvement.

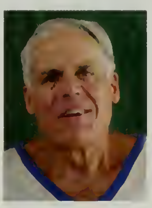
The environment, after all, is God's creation, and I observe two distinct worldviews regarding it. One says, God's creation is awesome, and with a little ingenuity, our technologies can make it even better. The other worldview says, God's creation is awesome, and our attempts to alter it to our liking are not likely to result in improvements, so we'd best use our ingenuity to learn how to adapt to nature rather than attempting to adapt nature to our desires. I ascribe to the latter mindset and try to take my cues about how to live from Jesus's lifestyle.

My faith tells me that Jesus had the capacity to choose any lot in life he wished. He could have chosen to be wealthy and magnanimously bestow his riches on others. He didn't. Fully conscious of his endless options, Jesus chose to be homeless, poor and unencumbered by the power trappings of the culture he so roundly rejected. And he beckons us to join him, not as bystanders but as members of a band of outcasts. It's as if Jesus implores us to viscerally experience with him the benefits of voluntary poverty. His words of invitation and opportunity to those he encountered were, "Follow me," not, "Worship me" or, "Put me on a pedestal"—a polite way to dismiss his behavior as hopelessly inimitable. None of us is capable of being completely like Jesus, but his exhortation to "follow me" encourages us to do our best and come as close as we can, asking for God's grace and guidance to augment our efforts.

**Jesus wants the best for his followers**, not the inferior, soul-eroding best that our culture panders. He wants us to have a lean and robust faith, not the flabby faith and vacuous values of a superficial life. The path that Jesus modeled for us is not a hair shirt of misery. He embraced voluntary poverty because he knew it to be the best sustenance for a healthy soul. When something is best, it's no sacrifice to embrace it, and no "shoulds" are needed to prompt us to the task.

So, in pursuit of communion with Jesus in his life of voluntary poverty, I've come up with a high-maintenance disciple's confessional prayer to try to keep me on the Christian path. I share it here in hopes it might be of use to any others who seek a similar journey.

Dear Lord, Great Spirit of Goodness and Love, I admit to being a drain on your patience. Please gift me with discernment to clearly know your will, desire to partner with you to implement your will and discipline not to be diverted or distracted. Please transform my self-absorbed existence and remake me into a vibrant conduit of your goodness and love, free from spiritual plaque, selfish concerns and material encumbrances. Finally, Lord, when my days on this earth are over, please inspire me to have lived a meaningful life centered on things that really matter rather than the baubles of our self-indulgent, secular culture, so I may exit this life with a minimum of regrets. Amen.



**Chuck Hosking** attends Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.

Guilt does nothing to help the person or situation we're feeling guilty about, and it makes us feel miserable.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Thomas to leave *The Mennonite*

## Will begin with Greencroft Communities Foundation in February 2014

Everett J. Thomas submitted his resignation Aug. 1 as editor of *The Mennonite* and CEO of The Mennonite, Inc. He began serving as editor on Nov. 1, 2000. Thomas will begin working in February 2014, as president of the Greencroft Communities Foundation, headquartered in Goshen, Ind.

The foundation serves six facilities in the Greencroft Communities system in Ohio and Indiana. The position also includes some chaplaincy and church relations work at Greencroft Goshen and Greencroft Middlebury (Ind.).

Thomas currently serves as the chair of the Greencroft Communities Foundation board and co-chaired the foundation's recent capital campaign that raised $3 million for a new health-care facility at Greencroft Goshen, to be finished in 2014.

Mark King, president and CEO of Greencroft Communities, in an Aug. 8 interview noted Thomas' "strong passion for serving some of the poorest residents on [Greencroft's] campus." King said that 40 percent of the residents and one-third of those in independent housing live below the federal poverty line. Thomas, he said, is also "personable, caring, friendly and relates well with aging residents as they work at that transition in their lives."

Everett J. Thomas

During Thomas' tenure as editor, says Barth Hague, board chair for The Mennonite, Inc., "*The Mennonite* has grown from a print magazine to a content distribution system for Mennonite Church USA. Through web-based technologies, our readership has continued to grow over the past decade."

Barth Hague

**Since 2000, *The Mennonite* has moved** from being printed by Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, Pa., to its base first in Goshen, Ind., and now in Elkhart, Ind. Besides publishing *The Mennonite*, The Mennonite, Inc., publishes two e-zines, *TMail* and *Menno Acontecer*, and maintains a website and Facebook page. Readership for the various media has grown to more than 37,000.

Hague says that Thomas "leaves the organization in good fiscal and operational health, for which the board of directors is deeply grateful."

Susan Sommer, who served 10 years as a board member and the last seven years as board chair, notes the many changes in the church during Thomas' tenure.

"[The magazine's staff] watched and reported while the goal of one denomination for two nations became two national denominations. [They] watched and reported through structural changes, through leadership changes, through identity changes."

She uses nautical images, something dear to Thomas, who enjoys sailing, to describe how she's enjoyed working with him "while we navigated the changes: some foreseen, many not; some smooth sailing, much not—but all in all, an exciting ride."

Bylaws for The Mennonite, Inc., stipulate that when resigning, the editor must give the board six months' notice.

"This opportunity from Greencroft came as something of a surprise to me," says Thomas. "Until I learned of this possibility, I was planning to work here until retirement in 2016. I consider the role of editor to be a sacred trust and did not make the decision lightly. But leading the Foundation will let me work at something about which I am also passionate."

**Greencroft Communities is a member** of Mennonite Health Services Alliance, now an agency of Mennonite Church USA. King said Thomas will be helpful to Greencroft Communities as they seek to "relate well to the broader church and be good stewards as they grow and develop."

Greencroft, he said, "develops a vibrant life for seniors," who come there "not to retire but to live and continue serving others as active participants in the community."

Last year, he said, residents gave 40,000 hours in volunteer work.

The transition to a new editor will be coordinated by the board of The Mennonite, Inc., and the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA, which must approve the selection of Thomas' successor. Marty Lehman, associate executive director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA, is the liaison between the Executive Board and the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Thomas came to *The Mennonite* after serving for 11 years as president of the Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, an agency of the former Mennonite Church that is no longer in existence. From 1972 to 1989, he served first as an English teacher and then administrator at Bethany Christian High School in Goshen.

Since 1992, Thomas has served on the Goshen City Council, representing the district in which Greencroft Goshen is located.

Thomas and Barbara, his wife, have two adult children and one grandchild. They are members of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.—*Gordon Houser*

# Western District hosts Year of the Bible Launch

## 220 hear Loren Johns, Patricia Shelly, Lois Barrett, attend 12 learning centers

Marlene Bogard, director of the Western District Conference (WDC) Resource Library and Year of the Bible (YOB) coordinator, opened the Year of the Bible Launch, held Aug. 1-2 on the Bethel College campus in North Newton, Kan., by noting that planners expected 100 participants. About 220 came.

The two-day event included worship, talks followed by discussion in table groups and 12 learning centers, with time for participants to attend four of them.

Loren Johns, professor of New Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., spoke on "Engaging the Word Through Christian Formation." He noted the Anabaptist distinctives of biblical interpretation, including "perspicuity," or clarity or understandability. He said that Christian formation is a matter of knowing, being and doing.

Patricia Shelly, professor of Bible and religion at Bethel College, spoke on "Engaging the Word Through Experiential Worship." Her talk, mixed with music and action by participants, included "Binding God's Word," "Embodying God's Word" and "Dwelling in God's Word." Discussing dwelling, she quoted New Testament scholar Raymond Brown, who said, "In the Scriptures we are in our Father's house, where the children are permitted to play."

Lois Barrett, a church consultant and a professor at AMBS who lives in Wichita, Kan., spoke on "Engaging the Word Through Life and Service." She discussed the ways people learn, then led a discussion of Luke 11:14-23. She said the church should be pointing out where the finger of God is at work and should be a sign, an instrument and foretaste of the reign of God.

The 12 learning centers included these: 40 Ways to Study the Bible, Navigating the YOB Website; Exploring the 12 Scriptures Project, Houston Style; Dig In: Bible Resources from MennoMedia; Reading the Bible in 90 Days; Written on our Hearts: Scripture Memory Methods for All Ages; The Lectionary Lens: For Pastors, Worship Planners; Become Like a Child: Speaking Kid's Language in Children's Time; Walk This Way: Bible Walkin' on the Plaza; Mining the Web: Bible Resources for Youth and Young Adults; Acting Out in Church: Bible and Drama; and Seminary in your Back Yard: Studying the Bible at AMBS—Great Plains.—*Gordon Houser*

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# Congregations switch membership

## Executive Board staff says seven have switched, two in process.

In the last couple of years, staff members in the Executive Board's leadership development office have been keeping a record of Mennonite Church USA congregations that leave one area conference and join a different one.

According to Beth Hunsberger, leadership development office manager, seven congregations have dropped membership in their original conferences and joined another Mennonite Church USA conference during this period. They include several that made the switch before the Executive Board's formal record keeping began:

2007: Swiss Mennonite Church, in Alsen, N.D., transferred its membership from Central Plains Mennonite Conference to the North Central Conference.

2009: First Mennonite of Berne, Ind., withdrew from Central District Conference and joined Ohio Conference.

2012: St. Paul (Minn.) Mennonite Church withdrew from Central Plains Conference and joined Central District Conference.

2013: Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan., withdrew from Western District conference and joined South Central Conference.

2013: Herold Mennonite Church, Cordell, Okla., withdrew from Western District conference and joined South Central Conference.

2013: Metro Mennonite Church, Mustang, Okla., withdrew from Western District Conference and joined South Central Conference.

2013: Frazer (Pa.) Mennonite Church, Lancaster (Pa.) Conference, transferred to Atlantic Coast Conference.

**Denominational minister Nancy Kauffmann** listed other congregations currently in possible transitions from one conference to another. She provided the following updates on July 23:

- Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., was introduced to Central District Conference in June. According to CDC's policy of membership, transferring is a two-year process, so Covenant will be up for vote in 2014.
- Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron, Ohio, has decided to leave Central District Conference and possibly join Ohio Conference. According to Mennonite Church USA policy, the former conference will hold records for up to one year while a former congregation moves to another conference. We will know by March 2014 if Salem will join Ohio Conference.

"We have a policy not to change records until we get official word from conferences that the transitions are complete," Kauffmann said.

The database will continue to include congregations that have left Mennonite Church USA completely, but those congregations will not show up in the *Directory*.

According to Lois Johns Kaufmann, conference minister for Central District Conference, two other congregations not listed by the database also joined CDC: Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship in 2004 and Shalom Mennonite Congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., in 2005.

"The losses make me wonder how the rural and urban parts of the church can get to know and trust each other," Kaufmann said on Aug. 15. "Even as I reflect on the losses, I recognize that new beginnings can be helpful."

**Central District Conference moderator Ron Guengerich** expressed his sadness at the loss of the congregations but appreciation for the new congregations that have joined CDC.

"We have conversation concerning the issues on which we sense there is disagreement," Guengerich said on Aug. 15, "but we also do not equate unity in Christ with uniformity on all issues. We trust that the Holy Spirit is moving and guiding in the different contexts. In CDC, we do not function as a body in which the conference is a parent that is enforcing uniformity and imposing one viewpoint on our member congregations."—*Everett J. Thomas*

*"We like the stewardship foundation that Everence has. There was never any question we would rely on Everence for health insurance when we turned 65."*
– Ted and Sue Noffsinger, Creekside Church of the Brethren

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# Local history and international cultures converge

## Eastern Mennonite Missions' Global Fair draws 2,000 to Hans Herr House.

Loves the Czech
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Tammy Evans

Two visitors add their touch to the "Lennon Wall" at the Czech Republic exhibit at Eastern Mennonite Missions' Global Fair on July 20.

The past and the present as well as international and local cultures all came together at Eastern Mennonite Missions' Global Fair on July 20. Around 2,000 people enjoyed a sunny Saturday on the grounds of the 1719 Hans Herr House near Willow Street, Pa., visiting exhibits featuring countries all over the globe and exploring the oldest homestead in Lancaster County.

Twenty-five EMM workers provided exhibits representing 21 countries.

Fairgoers got to sample and purchase food from many countries, including the always popular injera and wat from Ethiopia, chicken kebabs and walking tacos from Mexico, iced coffees from Vietnam, osh from Central Asia, and japrak (rice wrapped in grape leaves) from Albania.

Upohar Ethnic Cuisines made its first Global Fair appearance, offering Iraqi and Nepali food made by resettled refugees and new immigrants now living in Lancaster city.

Owner Srirupa Dasgupta founded the company to give refugee/immigrant women a chance to rebuild their lives, earn fair wages and become part of the local community.

Dasgupta said, "Many people tried our food. The sanbusa (triangular pastries stuffed with mixed vegetables) sold out quickly, so we'll have to bring more next year."

Also new this year was a small-scale "Lennon Wall" (named after John Lennon) at the Czech Republic exhibit. People from all over the world paint symbols and messages of love and peace on the real, ever-changing Lennon Wall when they visit Prague, the capital city.

The "Lennon Wall" at Global Fair went from being a blank white wooden wall at 11 a.m. to a completely paint-covered, fascinating mural by the end of the fair.

Exhibitors Jan Heindel and Stacy Nofziger, EMM workers in the Czech Republic, said the chance to add something to the wall seemed to appeal to all age groups.

Children particularly enjoyed a number of activity stations scattered around the grounds.

At the What's your house made of? station, children got to read about and touch various building materials used for houses around the world, including straw bales, pressed earth, adobe and bamboo.

Many fairgoers toured the Hans Herr house for the first time. The hand pump that draws water from the house's well was in almost constant motion throughout the afternoon.

Some of the boys in attendance said the Native American longhouse on the grounds was the best part of the fair.

"I liked the bows and arrows and all the animal skins," said Adrian Sedano.—*Linda Moffett of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

# Camp introduces middle schoolers to journalism

## Goshen College's Write on Sports camp first to take place outside New Jersey

Brian Yoder Schlabach

Participants in the Write on Sports camp at Goshen College run a practice lap with Goshen marathoner Justin Gillete. Gillette is ranked fifth in the world in marathon wins.

Ten rising middle schoolers from the Goshen, Ind., area blended a love of sports with a love of journalism by participating in Goshen College's Write on Sports camp July 8-19.

Write on Sports originated in New Jersey in 2005 from Byron Yake, a former national sports editor with the Associated Press and a 1961 Goshen College graduate.

The 2013 Goshen camp is the first to take place outside New Jersey.

"Write on Sports blends sports and writing in such a way that you learn almost unawares because you get caught up in the excitement of sports and the interactions between journalists and athletes," says Duane Stoltzfus, Goshen College professor of communication and director of the Write on Sports Goshen camp.

The campers can then take the interviewing and writing skills they develop during the camp, Stoltzfus says, and apply them to other subjects when they return to school in the fall.

Throughout the camp, participants worked on spot stories—brief news feature articles that are written in a short period of time—which are then published as posts on the camp blog.

**In addition to writing three to four** blog posts apiece, students each worked on a longer feature story, which will be combined into a small book. Each student also had the chance to create a video on a sports-related topic of his or her choosing that was shown to parents on the final day.

A highlight of the camp for many participants was a July 10 field trip to the University of Notre Dame (Ind.), where they had the chance to tour the digital media suite and the press box and interview two Notre Dame football players, a Notre Dame women's basketball player and Jack Nolan, a longtime basketball announcer.

**Campers also got to interview** three South Bend (Ind.) Silver Hawks players and a pitching coach and attend a Silver Hawks game.

"One of my favorite parts [of camp] was probably going to Notre Dame," said Diego Torres, who will enter seventh grade at Goshen Middle School in August. "It was really cool to get to go into the locker room and on the field," he said.

During the two-week camp, participants had the chance to interview a variety of people involved in athletics or journalism, including Anthony Anderson, assistant sports editor at *The Elkhart* (Ind.) *Truth*, Justin Gillette, a Goshen College graduate who is ranked fifth in the world in marathon wins; Natalie Newell, softball pitcher for Bethel College in Mishawaka, Ind., who led her team to the national tournament in 2013; Greg Keim, *Goshen News* sports reporter; and Jason Samuel, general manager of 91.1 FM The Globe, Goshen College's radio station.

LiAnna Overman, who began as a seventh grader at Goshen Middle School in August, said she "liked getting to interview people because you get to explore your own mind. You can think of questions that you probably never thought of before."—*Lauren Stoltzfus for Goshen College*

# Grant to digitize John Howard Yoder's work

## Mennonite Historical Library receives over $12,000 to provide online access.

The Mennonite Historical Library has received a $12,023 grant to digitize and provide online access to unpublished and informally published works of John Howard Yoder, one of the more prominent theologians of the 20th century.

The project is a collaborative effort between Goshen College's Mennonite Historical Library and Mennonite Church USA.

Rooted in the Mennonite tradition, Yoder introduced Anabaptist thought, including pacifism, into mainstream Christian theology.

Yoder served nearly 30 years as a teacher and scholar on the faculty at Goshen Biblical Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) and Notre Dame (Ind.) University.

The digital library will provide improved access to Yoder's unpublished works, including lectures, essays and correspondence.

Digital files of these works will become freely accessible through the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana and Indiana Memory websites.

A prototype of the project is already available at http://replica.palni.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15705coll18.

John D. Roth, director of the Mennonite Historical Library, says: "We are delighted to partner with the Archives of Mennonite Church USA and AMBS in this collaborative venture. This project is an important step in making the unique resources of our collections more accessible to researchers regionally around the world."

This project is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the Indiana State Library.

The institute is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums.

Its mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.—*Goshen College*

# Bluffton students relish *Flyer* experience

## *Phoenix Flyer* for convention run by Bluffton University group

Chay Reigle may speak for three fellow Bluffton (Ohio) University students when he sums up how he spent part of his summer vacation, in Phoenix.

"In just a week," says Reigle, a public relations major, "I beefed up my resume, got real-world experience in journalism, worked alongside professors, attended a convention filled with passionate, socially responsible people and even got to experience the infamous dry heat."

That checklist also applies to Bluffton students Donald Isaac, Kate Ellis and Kerry Bush. With Reigle, they helped produce the *Phoenix Flyer*, the daily news sheet at the Mennonite Church USA national convention July 1-6.

Working with them were Zachary Walton, an assistant professor of communication at Bluffton, who served as editor, and his wife, Karen Bontrager, a 2004 Bluffton graduate who was largely responsible for page layout and helped with editing.

Bluffton had accepted the assignment in Phoenix after Hannah Heinzekehr, an alumna and a planning coordinator for the convention, requested the university's help with the news sheet.

Bush, a Mennonite student and the primary photographer in the Bluffton group, says she learned "more about what goes on behind the scenes at a convention I attended multiple times as a youth."

A graphic design major from Bluffton, Bush was the "unofficial" social media manager as well, Walton says.

"She raised the visibility of what we were doing" with the printed convention publication, he says.

Sharing office space in the convention center with representatives from *Mennonite World Review* and *The Mennonite* also exposed the students to models of church journalism, he notes.

The students' coverage included stories about matters of concern to the church, such as youth attendance, and about immigration and other controversial issues that were not part of official convention events, Walton says.

One day, Ellis, a former *Lima News* photo intern who also assisted with photography and photo editing in Phoenix, joined a group that traveled nearly 180 miles to tour the Mexican border at Nogales.

The work introduced the young journalists to diverse and intriguing people as well. Isaac interviewed two pastors from South Korea and Bishop Victor Umoabasi, president of Mennonite Church Nigeria.

"I learned," says Reigle, a junior originally from Bluffton, "that no amount of coursework can substitute for real-world experience."—*Bluffton University*

# Undocumented woman threatened by husband

## MCC West Coast staff used special federal program to get her green card.

The green card that Francisca held in her hand for the first time on May 30 represented not only freedom to live in the United States legally but also freedom from fear that she would be separated by deportation from her two American-born daughters. Francisca's green card, an identification card attesting to her permanent resident status in the United States, also meant that her former husband could no longer threaten to turn her into immigration authorities if she reported his abuse.

Instead, she has a pathway to U.S. citizenship. (The names of Francisca and her children have been changed to protect their privacy.)

**Francisca migrated to the United States** in March 1997, when she was just 21. She worked at whatever jobs she could get—restaurant dishwasher or housecleaner.

She had a daughter, Sara, a year later, raising her as a single parent until she married a U.S. citizen in 2006. When she became pregnant in 2008, her husband began to abuse her verbally and physically. Once she gave birth to Ana, Francisca's husband threatened to have her deported if she tried to leave with her daughters.

During a visit in 2010, Francisca's father became worried about his daughter's safety and called the police. When they arrived, Francisca's husband had already fled, but he was arrested a few days later. While serving a two-year sentence, Francisca's husband continued to threaten her from jail, claiming he would obtain custody of Ana because he was a U.S. citizen.

When they learned about Francisca's history of being abused and her fear of being separated from her daughters, Francisca's pastors referred her to Gloria James, the immigration program coordinator for West Coast Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Upland, Calif.

When James heard her story, she knew Francisca was a prime candidate for legal residence through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This act allows undocumented victims of domestic violence, rape or sexual assault by a U.S. citizen to obtain lawful status. VAWA exists, in part, so that abusers cannot use the victim's immigration status to prevent the victim from calling the police or seeking safety, according to a White House fact sheet.

**Francisca was able to apply for legal residency** through the help of West Coast MCC immigration staff. James and her colleague, immigration staff associate Crystal Fernandez, who works in Reedley, Calif., guide immigrants through the maze of U.S. immigration policies.

West Coast MCC established the immigration program in the late 1980s at the request of Anabaptist churches in California who worked with undocumented people in and beyond their congregations. The pastors and MCC saw the need to keep families together, to advocate for just laws and to provide immigration education plus practical advice on specific cases.

Jennifer Deibert

Crystal Fernandez, left, and Gloria James, West Coast MCC immigration staff, work together to help some of the most vulnerable immigrants—those who have suffered domestic violence, rape or sexual assault.

**Francisca's case was one of about 32** that West Coast MCC worked with in 2012, using VAWA or the petition for a U visa, which allows victims of violent crimes to become legal residents. Each case requires many hours of work and can take years to process, James said. Francisca's case was active for two years.

Victims must provide exhaustive documentation, including police and medical reports, James says, and the process often retraumatizes the women. Applicants are required to tell their painful story multiple times.

James often listens to difficult stories that reinforce the need for MCC's presence in the field. Many lack the money or time to seek professional counseling. Through referrals to outside agencies, victims of crime can receive counseling and services to assist them in healing from past trauma.

"This group of victims, our brothers and sisters in Christ, don't often have the monetary resources or information they need to speak out. MCC is acting with compassion to empower women, especially when they are the most vulnerable," James says. "Everyone needs an advocate."*—Emily Will of Mennonite Central Committee*

# 17 Japanese churches create confession of faith

## Hokkaido group has been working on the statement for 10 years.

Muneo Mori

Members of Mennonite churches in Japan shown here are among those who are reemphasizing peace as the nation discusses restoring its military's ability to go to war outside Japan's borders. Back row, from left to right: Fumiko Kawaguchi holding baby Oki Kawaguchi, Yasuko Momono, Mary Beyler, Nobuyasu Kirai, Tsuyoshi Serita, Hiroshi Kaneko, Junko Nakanishi, Yoko Mizuki, Mariko Ando, Koichi Uryu. Seated in the front from left to right: Maki Kawaguchi, Kizuki Kawaguchi, Shozo Sato, Mitsuko Yaguchi, Mitsuru Ishido, Yukari Kaga.

Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference (Hokkaido) has produced a Christ-centered confession of faith that outlines five core beliefs emphasizing community, care for the environment, and peacemaking.

A conference of Japanese Mennonites in May adopted a formal document defining what they believe collectively despite their autonomy and differences.

Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference (Hokkaido) adopted a confession of faith during its 61st gathering on May 18.

The conference is comprised of 17 churches. The document reads: "Each congregation is autonomous, independent and self-supporting, but as disciples of Jesus Christ we hereby establish the Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference Confession of Faith to reaffirm our shared faith today with the hope of further deepening our mutual fellowship and cooperation."

The core principles, as translated by Ken Shenk, who spent many years among Mennonites in Japan with Mennonite Board of Missions, a Mennonite Mission Network predecessor agency, are these:

1. Jesus Christ is the Word of God the Father and is revealed by the Holy Spirit.
2. The church is a community of believers that learns from the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
3. Believers listen to the Lord Jesus Christ, serve each other and love their neighbors.
4. Believers care for creation, build peace and justice, which come from Christ, and participate in the work of the kingdom of God.
5. Following Jesus' nonviolent way of life, we as believers do not participate in war.

"Above all, these five articles make it clear that we live by the same faith as our church's ancestors in faith, the Anabaptists/Mennonites, who put the Lord Jesus at the center of their faith and sought to listen to and follow Christ in their lives," wrote Akira Mimoto, pastor of Tottori Mennonite Church, Kushiro, in a document translated to English. "I think that it is highly significant that our conference's 17 congregations, despite their distinctive autonomous and independent organizational styles, passed as a group of Mennonites this resolution to value and share in these articles of faith that were valued by our forebears in faith."

**The effort to write and adopt** the confession of faith began about 10 years ago, says Mary Beyler, a Mennonite Mission Network worker who serves with Mennonite congregations in Hokkaido.

The churches have been referencing historical confessions of faith and the confessions of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite World Conference but eventually determined that a confession reflecting their unique Japanese and Anabaptist perspective was also needed. Beyler was part of the committee that was appointed to write the confession of faith.

"Some churches wanted to be able to introduce what is unique and special about Mennonites when other Christians or not-yet Christians come to our churches," Beyler says. "The confession is short enough to use often in worship, to recite and to confess together. It can help us think about and to rethink the foundations of our faith. I hope it is recited regularly, studied and preached."

**The confession is also significant** as the Japanese discuss possible changes to the nation's 1947 Constitution to restore its military's ability to take offensive action outside Japan's borders.

However, the confession is not a reaction to this. The Hokkaido conference churches have long established that their antiwar stance is because of their faith in Jesus.

Japan's military does play a support role in other nations, such as backing U.S. troops in Afghanistan.—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

# An overview of edgy Mennonite blogs, websites

## Blogs include Femonite, Femmonite, MennoNerds, Abnormal Anabaptist.

The past decade has seen a rise in blogs and websites published by Mennonites. Some of these blogs feature Mennonite voices on the margins. Others hope to attract those new to the Mennonite faith. Others serve as an outlet for an individual to share reflections on theology, society and cultural trends. This article provides an overview to a selection of these blogs and websites.—*Anna Groff*

**Abnormal Anabaptist**
**abnormalanabaptist.wordpress.com**
**Launch year:** 2007
**Who started it:** Robert Martin
**Purpose:** Blogger Martin writes about various themes and topics from an Anabaptist perspective. "I recognize that I have been informed and shaped by other thoughts, so I may not necessarily be 'normal' when it comes to what some may consider traditional Anabaptism," Martin says. "And yet, at the same time, even Anabaptist thought, practice and theology aims for being 'abnormal' in relation to the culture around us. So, thus gives birth to the idea of being an 'Abnormal Anabaptist.' "
**Audience:** Most readers are Anabaptists/Mennonites engaging conversation or folks from outside the ethnic-historical tradition seeking to learn more about what it means to be an Anabaptist.
**Web traffic:** The blog has 56 followers and 500 followers on Twitter.—*Robert Martin*

**Femmonite**
**www.femmonite.com**
**Launch year:** 2012
**Who started it:** Meghan Florian
**Purpose:** The blog is a "mashup of feminism and theology with a splash of Anabaptism," says Florian.
**Audience:** The audience is readers who are interested in thinking about theology and feminism together in the context of the church and in conversation with the wider world.
**Traffic:** New posts generate, on average, 350 unique views.
—*Meghan Florian*

**Femonite: Musings from a Mennonite Feminist**
**femonite.com**
**Launch year:** 2012
**Who started it:** Hannah Heinzekehr is the creator. The blog grew out of an assignment for one of the graduate school courses that required her to blog on a daily basis.
**Purpose:** The purpose is to explore intersections between feminism, Mennonite/Anabaptist identity and theology. "I also wanted to create a conversational space for women within Mennonite Church USA because I felt there was a hunger within the church for discussions about gender, leadership and faith among women," Heinzekehr says.
**Audience:** The audience is people affiliated with Mennonite or Anabaptist churches and primarily women in their 20s to 40s. "It also pulls in a lot of people who are just curious about who or what Mennonites are," she says. "Every time a new Amish reality show airs, my blog hits go up."
**Traffic:** The blog has 230 subscribers and receives around 10,000 page views per month.—*Hannah Heinzekehr*

**Jesus Radicals**
**jesusradicals.com**
**Launch year:** 2000
**Who started it:** The website as a way to communicate a group of evangelical college students' experiences being arrested at the School of the Americas. Nekeisha and Andy Alexis-Baker were the primary people behind the site at the time. In 2010, Mark Van Steenwyk proposed that the work he and a few others were doing at www.jesusmanifesto.com could be united into the Jesus Radicals website. Currently, Jesus Radicals is coordinated primarily by Nekeisha Alexis-Baker, Joanna Shenk, Mark Van Steenwyk and Brett Taylor.
**Purpose:** The focus is to explore the theologically practical politics of a Jesus-centered life and how that way of life may benefit from a critical engagement with anarchist political stances (defined broadly as a commitment to critique of all forms of domination). It includes a theology section that includes the most comprehensive collection of articles by Jacques Ellul anywhere in the world, as well as other radical theologians with anarchic tendencies. All this is augmented by articles, a biweekly podcast, a community forum and an annual gathering.—*Mark Van Steenwyk*

**Audience:** The audience is radically minded Christians, many in their 20s and 30s.
**Traffic:** It has 500 regular e-newsletter subscribers and receives between 80,000 and 100,000 visits each month.

**Marginal Mennonite Society**
**facebook.com/marginalmennonitesociety**
**Who started it:** Charlie Kraybill
**Launch year:** 2011
**Purpose:** "We are Marginal Mennonites, and we're not ashamed. We're marginal because no self-respecting Mennonite organization would have us." Read the entire MMS declaration on its Facebook page.
**Audience:** The audience includes self-identified Marginal Mennonites.
**Traffic:** They have 1,260 "likes" on Facebook.
*—Marginal Mennonite Society*

**MennoNerds**
**mennonerds.com**
**Launch year:** 2012
**Who started it:** Chris Lenshyn, Ryan Robinson, Andrew Mugford, Eddie Gonzalez, Justin Hiebert and Robert Martin. The site now has 25 bloggers contributing.
**Purpose:** The contributors include a group of Anabaptist-minded bloggers who have made social networking connections. They do not have an explicitly stated mission beyond creating online community for people interested in hearing and learning more about Anabaptism through our various blogs.
**Audience:** The audience includes traditionally minded Mennonites and Anabaptists to more neo-Anabaptist folks. Most readers are from the United States and Canada, but some are from Australia and the United Kingdom.

"Folks who are curious about theology, peace, justice issues and living a Christian walk in our postmodern/post-Christian world seem to gravitate in our direction," Martin says.
**Traffic:** MennoNerds.com receives 74 page views per day. The Facebook page has 179 "likes" and 77 followers on Twitter. However, this is not necessarily representative of the broader spread because individual bloggers may have a larger following.*—Robert Martin*

**Our Stories Untold**
**ourstoriesuntold.com**
**Launch year:** 2012
**Who started it:** Rachel Halder
**Purpose:** The mission of Our Stories Untold is threefold: to bring awareness and education on sexualized violence and abuse within religious communities—specifically the Mennonite church—through the online blog and speaking events; to foster and support survivors within these communities so they feel safe to share stories; and to create holistic healing and empowerment through storytelling, sexuality and spirituality retreats for women. The blog component is available for women to tell their stories and for the community to be educated on rape issues within the church.
**Audience:** Though the blog is based in the Mennonite church, many people outside the church follow as well. "It's rare that sexualized violence is discussed in religious circles, so I think people are interested even if they don't know anything about Mennonites," says Halder.
**Traffic:** The blog receives 100-1,000 unique visits a day, depending on the content posted.*—Rachel Halder*

**Pink Menno**
**pinkmenno.org**
**Launch year:** 2008
**Who started it:** The campaign and blog were started by a group of friends, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer folks and their allies.
**Purpose:** Pink Menno supports the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in marriage, in ordination and in the loving community of Christian fellowship within the Mennonite church. Pink Menno envisions the day when it becomes irrelevant because the church is fully living out Christ's radical love toward all people, especially toward those in the margins. Pink Menno will remain a visible, vocal presence supporting, sustaining and furthering genuine dialogue.
**Audience:** The audience includes Mennonite Church USA. It especially focuses on giving voice to the silenced and marginalized.
**Traffic:** Over 1,000 members have registered on the Pink Menno networking site, and web traffic around the time of Phoenix 2013 was 100-500 unique visitors daily.*—Darian Harnish*

**Roots of Justice**
**rootsofjusticetraining.org**
**Launch year:** Roots of Justice began operating as an independent organization in 2012. Roots of Justice's initial programs, however, were spun off the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Damascus Road Antiracism Process, which began in 1995.

*(Continued on page 42)*

*(Continued from page 41)*

**Who started it:** Friends of the MCC U.S. Damascus Road Antiracism Process worked with MCC U.S. to enable a successful birth of a new organization.
**Purpose:** The Facebook page connects with a wide range of constituents interested in antioppression. The email listserv provides a forum where Roots of Justice participants and others can share information.
**Audience:** The audience is anyone interested in antioppression work and past participants of Roots of Justice programs, including Damascus Road.
**Traffic:** The Facebook page has 180 "likes" and the listserv includes 100 email addresses.—*Phil Morice Brubaker*

**The Social Mennonite**
**http://paper.li/HarryJarrettJr/1304098626 i**
**Launch year:** 2011
**Who started it:** Harry Jarrett
**Purpose:** Jarrett publishes The Social Mennonite on a daily basis, drawing from social media, blogs, news sources and more. He compiles these into an online paper that focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite related items.
**Audience:** Jarrett began this in 2011 as he was preparing to livestream the delegate sessions at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Pittsburgh. It was one of the ways he was working at building awareness and online community among Anabaptists.
**Traffic:** To date there are 50 subscribers, 4,883 views, and 947 shares.—*Harry Jarrett*

**Young Anabaptist Radicals**
**young.anabaptistradicals.org**
**Launch year:** 2006
**Who started it:** Tim Nafziger, Sarah Thompson, Katie Hochstedler, Eric Meyer, Carl Meyer, Michael J. Sharp, Lora Steiner, Brian Hamilton, Tim Showalter Ehst, Paco Michelson and Jonny Gerig Meyer
**Purpose:** The goal is to provide a space for conversation among and for self-identified young Anabaptist radicals. They imagine together what it might mean to root our lived faith today (and tomorrow) in the spirit and soil of early Anabaptism.
**Audience:** The audience is those drawn to Anabaptist values from outside the Mennonite church ("Anabaptist camp followers," as Levi Miller has called them) and those within the church drawn to a more radical expression of our heritage. The blog boasts 96 writers who have posted at least once in the last seven years.
**Traffic:** The site receives about 1,500 unique visitors a month and 3,000 page views. We have over 350 "likes" on Facebook.—*Tim Nafziger*
—*Compiled by Anna Groff*

# Leaders learn giving is mutual

## Nine Service Adventure leaders meet for orientation in Kansas.

True hospitality cuts both ways. That's what nine new Service Adventure leaders learned about gift-giving as they met for orientation July 22-27 in Hutchinson, Kan. Historically, the Latin meaning of "hospitality" signified both the guest and the host would bring a gift.

Michele Hershberger, a Bible and ministry professor at Hesston (Kan.) College, said sometimes that gift will be a listening ear, or sometimes it will be showing humility or faith. People bring whatever they have acquired on their journeys—wherever they are along the way. So, in the case of Service Adventure, it's a reciprocal relationship between both the leaders and the community, and the leaders and the participants.

In addition to listening to Hershberger, Service Adventure leaders also spent the week discussing worship nights, learning components, simple and sustainable living, budgets and scheduling.

Several Mennonite Mission Network employees and previous Service Adventure leaders, including Tonya Ramer Wenger, who is a previous Mission Network board member gave input during the week.

At the end of the week, the leaders were anointed and sent to their new communities, where they will spend the next two years.

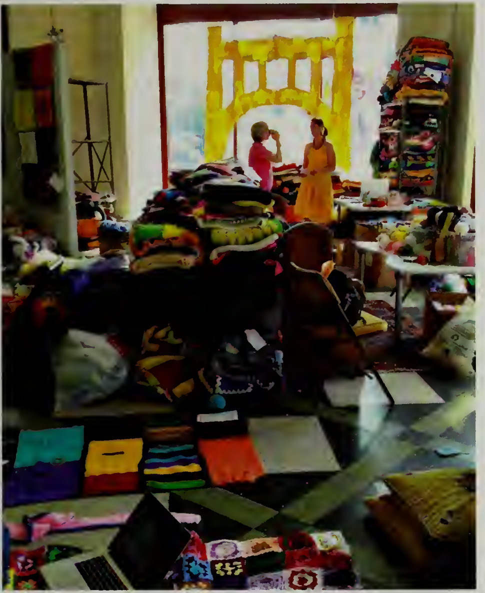
Service Adventure leaders will mentor participants ranging in age from 17 to 20 and focus on faith formation and leadership development.

Giving and receiving counsel, they will welcome two groups, each serving for one year, into their homes in Albany, Ore.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Anchorage, Alaska; Colorado Springs, Colo.; Johnstown, Pa.; or Raleigh, N.C. Philippi, W.Va., is also a service location but is taking a sabbatical this year.

Susan Nisly, Service Adventure director, reflected on the new group of leaders: "This incredible group of leaders is such a confirmation of God's faithfulness … my prayer for them is that they can use this time to continue to develop their leadership gifts as they pour themselves into the lives of the young adults they will be living with."—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

# 'Yarn bomb' covers Pittsburgh bridge

## Eastern Mennonite University alumna plans massive community knitting project.



Jenny Tabrum

Here, sections of knitted or crocheted panels are piling up, awaiting installation on the bridge in August. Gross is at back right.

On the weekend of Aug. 10, Pittsburgh's famous Andy Warhol Bridge began wearing a massive, knitted sweater of sorts, designed, created and installed (save for high-altitude stuff left to professionals) by more than 1,400 volunteer knitters in and around Pittsburgh.

Knit the Bridge, led by Amanda Gross graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., represents the largest-ever U.S. "yarn bomb," which Gross describes as a sort of "joyful graffiti" that covers public spaces and objects in knitted artwork.

The installation, which will stay up for a month, will include thousands of colorful 34- x 72-inch panels covering the bridge's superstructure, plus miles of yarn knitted into narrower railing covers.

Gross focused on art as a peacebuilding tool while studying at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and came up with the idea of the yarn bomb as a way to inspire wide community participation in a public art project.

For the past year, she has been working full-time on the project, which is funded through an Indiegogo campaign and support from numerous organizations.

"I was looking for different ways to connect people and connect different communities," says Gross, who organized a much smaller yarn bomb in downtown Pittsburgh a few years ago with other members of the city's Fiberarts Guild. "The process is just as important as the final product."

While covering a major and massive physical feature in Pittsburgh with yarn is a significant artistic achievement in itself, both the act of knitting and bridges are symbolic of the connectedness Gross hopes to achieve through Knit the Bridge.

**As of early July**, some 1,500 people had contributed knitted panels, representing more than 80 percent of municipalities and townships within Allegheny County (home to Pittsburgh), as well as numerous other communities in southwest Pennsylvania.

"It's really a community project. It's a wonderful thing, and it's a privilege to be working on it," says Penny Mateer, an artist and lifelong Pittsburgh resident who is co-directing Knit the Bridge.

Ranging in age from very young to very old, knitters who have contributed panels represent the city's different racial, ethnic and class communities. Elementary schools have participated; kids in juvenile detention have knitted panels; retirement homes have pitched in.

The National Public Radio affiliate in Pittsburgh ran a story in late June about a group of boys in a local program for at-risk teens who are finger-knitting a piece for the bridge.

Gross and her colleagues drummed up support for the effort through social media, word of mouth and with the help of about 90 people who volunteered to lead outreach and organize knitting parties in their own communities.

**Other than rules against** letters, numbers or other representational imagery, contributors were given free rein to design their individual panels.

The Knit the Bridge installation will remain up through Sept. 8. After coming down, the panels will be washed and donated to charity.

In mid-June, the county council unanimously approved an ordinance to allow Knit the Bridge to proceed. Also as of late June, the community-made panels totaled 116,688 square feet of hand-knitted or crocheted panels.

One reason for the project's wide appeal, Gross says, is that knitting and crocheting are generally seen as accessible "crafts" rather than fine art. "That part has made it really easy for people to get excited about it and feel like they can be a part of it," Gross says. "A lot of people are missing that. … They just want an opportunity to participate."—*Andrew Jenner for Eastern Mennonite University*

# Unfinished business with John Howard Yoder

## Seminary president blogs about renewed interest in discipline case.

Time has its way. As does the Spirit. The accelerating interest in and widespread appreciation for John Howard Yoder's theological work has also provoked renewed calls for the Mennonite church, including Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., to revisit unfinished business with his legacy.

In February and March of 2012, AMBS faculty did significant work to review AMBS' history with John Howard Yoder and to come to a shared agreement that guides how we teach, critique, interpret and use Yoder's work with integrity, recognizing the significance of his theological work and the harmfulness of his actions.

In addition to the hard work our AMBS faculty has done to interpret the complicated ironies of John Howard Yoder's legacy over many years, I wanted to add a personal word.

As the current president of AMBS, I'm committed to a new transparency in the truthtelling that must happen. We must strive to get the facts straight, acknowledge healing work that has been done and shoulder the urgent healing work that must still be done.

Some who are only tuning in now will say, "I had no idea about John Howard Yoder's widespread sexual harassment and abuse." Others will say, "Why keep bringing this up; it was settled long ago; he submitted to a church disciplinary process and was cleared for ongoing ministry." Others will say, "*Finally*. This has taken far too long."

John Howard Yoder

The renewed outcry for truthtelling about what really happened and what didn't happen in the 1970s, '80s and early '90s has deepened my resolve and the resolve of Mennonite Church USA leaders, including Ervin Stutzman, to continue the healing journey.

**I was not close to the John Howard Yoder saga** when it was unfolding and only heard him speak once during his visit in 1997 to Harrisonburg, Va. Now, as I review the written materials about him and talk to people, I am dumbfounded (appalled) at how long it took for anyone in authority to publicly denounce his harmful behavior.

I am also keenly aware that I was not there. I do not presume that I would have done things differently at that time. I thank God for all the faithful and arduous labor that was exerted under extreme stress to stop John Howard Yoder's sexual abuse and to listen to the victims—as ineffective as it proved to be for many years.

As AMBS professor Ted Koontz said elsewhere, "The women who experienced sexual and power abuse by John personally have far too long been sidelined (along with others who were directly abused by other church leaders) and are rightfully at the center of our concern. I nevertheless am aware the hurt caused by John's behavior was and is far-reaching. That circle of hurt includes some who carried major responsibility to work at stopping his abusive behavior, who were unsuccessful and who were burdened by the weight of that failure."

**True, there was confusion** about who John Howard should be accountable to, with various influential church leaders and institutions continuing to send him all over the world, even as AMBS leaders of the time discouraged his use as a resource. It took far too long to realize how he was outmanipulating people who sought to confront him, along with providing his own theological rationalization for his sexual activities. But it's time to say frankly that we have fallen short. Even those of us now in leadership who weren't remotely involved at the time must commit to the deep listening needed to get the facts straight.

Sara Wenger Shenk

What did actually happen? What was done to address it and what was left undone regrettably, or done poorly, in retrospect? Who suffered because of that failure? Who was disbelieved for too long even as an abuser was allowed to continue his globetrotting ministry without public censure? In what ways would we respond differently today given the benefit of hindsight and so much learning in the meantime?

Yes, John Howard's ministry was and is an exposition of the gospel that is reaping an enormous blessing. Thanks be to God. This flawed man was gifted in ways that allowed him to grasp radically good news in the gospel that needed retelling, reimagining.

Ironically, it is because of that gospel that we can fearlessly call sin what it is. The far-reaching hurt of the evil that was perpetrated and allowed to fester too long must be more fully and publicly acknowledged. It is then that we can move into deeper healing and reconciliation. May it be so. *—published originally on Sara Wenger Shenk's post,* Practicing Reconciliation *on the AMBS website. Reprinted with permission*

# AMBS adopts statement on teaching Yoder

## Three faculty conversations in 2012 dealt with his 'complicated legacy.'

*In 2012, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary president Sara Wenger Shenk, dean Rebecca Slough and teaching faculty member Ted Koontz organized three faculty conversations about John Howard Yoder's complicated legacy. This statement reports on shared agreements that will guide how AMBS faculty teach, critique, interpret and use Yoder's work with integrity, recognizing the significance of his theological work and the wrongfulness of his actions. As a learning community, we expect to exercise greater freedom in speaking about the nature of his legacy and will post this statement in an internally accessible place for AMBS faculty, staff and students.*

John Howard Yoder's scholarly and personal legacies have presented opportunities and complications for AMBS over many years. His contributions to the Christian church through his scholarship and teaching have been innumerable. His behavior, however, wounded many women, some of whom were his students at AMBS. His creative, insightful, perhaps even revolutionary thinking on ethics, peace and ecclesiology seem contradictory when set beside his inappropriate actions.

When AMBS colleagues and administrators became aware of Yoder's abusive behavior toward women, he was confronted. They worked diligently to hold him accountable over multiple years, and when it became evident that their attempts were ineffective, he was asked to leave in 1984. Finally, in 1992, he submitted to a disciplinary process with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference in response to charges of misconduct brought by a number of women.

**The Church Life Commission** of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference took on leadership of the disciplinary process. The CLC formed an accountability and support group that met with John more than 30 times between the fall of 1992 and the spring of 1996. It also suspended his ministerial credentials and mandated that John undergo psychological evaluation and counseling. The accountability and support group's final report stated that Yoder made sufficient changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to bring closure to the process. The CLC concluded its report by recommending continuing use of an accountability plan and encouraging "Yoder and the church to use his gifts of writing and teaching." In the latter part of 1997, shortly before Yoder's death, he was invited again to teach at AMBS as a substitute teacher for a professor who was ill, and he was also reconciled with his home congregation.

During their review in 2012 of AMBS's history with John Howard Yoder, the faculty at AMBS noted these shared agreements for their use of Yoder's writings and theology in their teaching:

- We recognize that John's legacy is deeply connected with AMBS and that his thought should be freely evaluated, appropriated or criticized by faculty and students.
- As faculty we agree that
  - his work will be read appreciatively yet critically in light of its contributions to the fields of ecclesiology, ethics, peace and justice;
  - his work has been and will continue to be read and evaluated within a broader context of scholars and practitioners, especially those who are addressing similar issues related to ethics, peace and justice;
  - the tension created by his work on ethics, peace and justice and his behavior that was hurtful to many women will be open for examination;
  - references to Yoder's submission to and completion of the disciplinary process with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference will be made as appropriate with students, future faculty and scholars;
  - Yoder will be presented as the complex person that he was—intellectually brilliant, deeply caring, generous, creative, shy, dismissive of people who confronted him about his misuse of power and manipulative while crossing boundaries with women.
- Faculty will address forthrightly questions or issues raised as students consider the possible connections between his thought and some of his actions and will examine what these writings communicate to vulnerable women, men and children.
- AMBS will use particular care when utilizing his writing on singleness, marriage and sexuality and how to interpret it.
- As a result of AMBS's experience with Yoder, we will continue to learn together and teach about
  - the nature of power and authority and the issues that arise when they are used inappropriately and/or unwittingly;
  - the necessity of recognizing and maintaining appropriate physical and psychological boundaries, especially with those of lesser power and authority or greater vulnerability

> We commit ourselves as faculty of AMBS to ongoing healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in God's beloved community, while acknowledging that not everyone fully trusts Yoder's repentance.

(especially among students, colleagues and people inside and outside of the church);

- accountability for personal behavior at all times;
- the obligation to treat accusations or incidents of misconduct, especially sexual misconduct, seriously and with appropriate urgency and ensuring that there is an effective grievance policy in place;
- the necessity of and strategies for protecting vulnerable women, men, children and anyone living on the margins of our communities and congregations.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that John Howard Yoder's theological legacy is proving to be widely influential and transformative for many people. We are grateful that many people testify to a rediscovery of Jesus through Yoder's insightful writings. We also give thanks that the church's disciplinary process appears to have brought Yoder to repentance and restoration with at least some former colleagues and church family members before his sudden death.

We regret the hurt that was inflicted by this flawed man and an accountability process that while good-intentioned and effective in part, didn't go far enough to heal all wounds. We commit ourselves as faculty of AMBS to ongoing healing, forgiveness and reconciliation in God's beloved community while acknowledging that not everyone fully trusts Yoder's repentance. We will teach from Yoder and others who provide helpful theological perspectives with enhanced alertness to our own failures and a keen attentiveness to what in us contributes to life abundant and what stands in need of God's ongoing redemption.—*Reprinted with permission*

# Excerpts from the former *The Mennonite*

## *The Mennonite, Gospel Herald* published articles about Yoder in 1992.

*Editor's note: These excerpts from the July 28, 1992, issue of the (former)* The Mennonite *are on pages 325 and 326. We republish the excerpts to show some of what the church press reported on the situation and how church leaders were working with John Howard Yoder in the early 1990s. A*Gospel Herald *report is in the July 14, 1992, issue on pages 11 and 12.*

The Church Life Commission of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference on June 27, 1992, suspended the ministerial credentials of John Howard Yoder over allegations of sexual misconduct. … The action calls for restitution and a program of therapy, after which restoration of credentials will be considered. …

Although the (report from the conference task force) did not elaborate about the nature of the allegations, three of the eight women told *The Elkhart Truth* that most of the incidents took place in the 1970s through the mid-1980s, when Yoder was president and professor of theology at Goshen Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

The women, who were in positions of church leadership, said the allegations included improper hugging, use of sexual innuendo or overt sexual language, sexual harassment, kissing or attempts to kiss women, and forcible sexual behavior. Sexual intercourse was not among the allegations.

"It can range from suggesting, 'Sit on my lap' to actually pulling people down on his lap, inappropriate kissing and hugging," one of the women said. "It certainly violated the professor-student relationship. It certainly violates the marriage covenant and our understanding of that within the church." …

**Rationalization:** After five meetings with the task force, Yoder agreed to meet with an accountability group and to undergo therapy "to work thoroughly with … a high degree of rationalization and a denial of the problems associated with his sexual misconduct," according to the task force's statement. …

This marks the third investigation into the allegations of Yoder's misconduct since rumors first came to the attention of a Mennonite Church official in the 1970s, leading some to call for Yoder's resignation from the seminary. According to a source close to the investigation, Goshen Biblical Seminary examined similar allegations but dropped the matter in 1984, when Yoder ended his seminary employment. …

A second investigation, initiated by Prairie Street Mennonite Church elders in 1985-86, never got off the ground because no women would come foward for a face-to-face confrontation with Yoder, sources said.—*Tom Price in* The Elkhart Truth

**Other reporting about Yoder**
**by Tom Price in *The Elkhart Truth***

| | |
|---|---|
| June 29, 1992 | Theologian Cited in Sex Inquiry |
| July 12, 1992 | Theologian's Future Faces 'Litmus Test' |
| July 13, 1992 | Theologian Accused: Women Report Instances of Inappropriate Conduct |
| July 14, 1992 | A Known Secret: Church Slow to Explore Rumors Against a Leader |
| July 15, 1992 | Yoder's Actions Framed in Writings |
| July 16, 1992 | Teachings Tested: Forgiveness, Reconciliation in Discipline |
| April 21, 1993 | Yoder No Longer Included in Calvin College Sessions |

# MWC launches study of its global members

## 30 people gather from 18 countries for Mennonite World Conference project.

John D. Roth

Above is a work session of the Mennonite World Conference Global Anabaptist Profile Project. From left: Cesar Montenegro (Guatemala), Diego Martinez (Colombia), Andrea Moya (Ecuador), Alfonso Cabana (Paraguay) and Tiago Lemes (Brazil).

Nearly 30 people from 18 countries gathered at Goshen (Ind.) College July 29-Aug. 2 to launch the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) "Global Anabaptist Profile."

The MWC project, which is organized and funded by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College, will be the first systematic study of how the MWC "shared convictions" are finding expression among the 25 groups participating in the study.

It will also shed new light on the demographics of the rapidly growing global Anabaptist family and create a digital library of testimonies from pastors and lay members of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations around the world.

"The size of the Anabaptist-Mennonite global fellowship has nearly tripled in the past three decades, with most of the growth coming outside of Europe and North America," said John D. Roth, director of the Institute and secretary of the MWC Faith and Life Commission. "Yet we really don't know very much about the lived experiences—the beliefs, practices and challenges—of our global body."

**According to Roth, the project** has been in development for nearly three years. In 2011, Roth helped establish the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College and initiated a series of conversations with MWC, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the mission agencies of various Mennonite conferences regarding the global survey. Following the approval of the project by MWC's Executive Committee and General Council, Roth forged a partnership with Kanagy, who has extensive experience with similar church member profiles. Kanagy will serve as a co-director of the project.

**The 25 MWC member conferences** who are participating in the Global Anabaptist Profile were selected randomly, with proportional representation within each of MWC's five regions. This spring, church leaders from each group identified a research associate to carry out the project within their country. At the consultation in Goshen, the research associates met for four days to revise the survey, refine additional questions specific to their conference and receive basic training in social research methods. They also spent time in daily worship, sharing, singing and prayer.

Participants in the consultation expressed resounding enthusiasm for the project. "The task ahead is enormous, but I'm very hopeful that the project will help my church better understand where we are, where we are heading and how we fit into the global church—the bigger Body of Christ," said Tigist Tesfaye Gelagle, who represented the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia.

"The research will be owned by our church," said M.Z. Ichsanudin of the GITJ church in Indonesia, "so that our conference will have data that can help our decisions. This is a bridge for building brotherhood among the Mennonite churches all around the world."—*Goshen College*

## CALENDAR

**Peach Cobbler Mennonite Relief Auction**, Sept. 13-14, at the Georgia National Fairgrounds, Perry, Ga. Visit www.peachcobblersale.org for more information.

## WORKERS

**Brody, Robert**, was licensed as lead pastor of New Danville Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 2.

**Brubacher, Randall**, was ordained as deacon of Churchtown Mennonite Church, Narvon, Pa., on April 7.

**Gomez, Lou**, began a term on the pastoral team of Mennonite Friendship Communities, S. Hutchinson, Kan., on May. 13.

**Horst, Carmen**, was ordained as associate pastor of James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 23.

**Kanagy, Audrey**, was ordained as associated pastor of Living Light Mennonite Church, Washington Boro, Pa., on June 2.

**Krebs, Matthew**, was licensed as lead pastor of Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa., on June 16.

**Landis, Troy**, was licensed as discipleship coach of Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pa., on Aug. 4.

**Lehman, Philip Ray**, was ordained as Minister of Music and Outreach at Waynesboro Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., on May 5.

**Raid, Elizabeth**, began a term on the pastoral team of Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson, Kan., on May. 13.

**Weaver, Darrel**, was licensed for church development in Germany at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on June 16.

## OBITUARIES

**Daub, John Joseph**, 72, Keswick, Va., died June 27. Spouse: Jeanette Daub. Children: Debbie Daub, Daniel, John; seven grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

**Derstine, Irene B. Souder**, 91, Souderton, Pa., died July 21, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Elwood A. Derstine (deceased). Parents: Wilmer B. Souder, Sr., and Marietta M. Bergey Souder. Children: Terry S., William S., Ray S.; seven grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 29 at Souderton Mennonite Homes Chapel.

**Detweiler, Allen S.**, 87, Sellersville, Pa., died July 10. Spouse: Jean Detweiler. Parents: Harvey and Anna Stover Detweiler. Children: Allen L., Joanne McCurdy; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 25 at Rockhill Mennonite Community Chapel, Sellersville.

**Friesen, Peter "Pete,"** 92, Altona, Manitoba, died July 17. Spouse: Anne Hildebrand Friesen. Parents: Peter G. and Susanna Loeppky Friesen. Funeral: July 23 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Gaeddert, Rosella Regehr**, 89, Inman, Kan., died July 20. Spouse: Elmer David Gaeddert (deceased). Parents: George T. and Helen Fehrau Regehr. Child: Doris Dick; one grandchild; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 24 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**Geiser, Bennet W.**, 101, Orrville, Ohio, died July 11. Spouse: Grace A. Steiner Geiser. Parents: Peter and Mary Schmid Geiser. Children: Leonard, Lowell, Arlene Lehman, Marlene Fossum, Elaine Schloneger; 12 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 29 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

**Geiser, Lois Arlene Balmer**, 73, Bluffton, Ohio, died July 4. Spouse: Ronald Geiser. Parents: Sidney and Thelma Wingate Balmer. Children: Jon, Deron, Kamala Renick; seven grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Grieser, Glenford Gene**, 68, Hamilton, Ind., died July 23. Spouse: Karen Stuckey Grieser. Parents: Charles J. and Sophie Rupp Grieser. Child: Charlie. Funeral: July 29 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

**Hamm, Miriam Glanzer**, 83, Freeman, S.D., died July 12, of a massive stroke. Spouse: Donald Hamm (deceased). Parents: Joseph P. and Theresa Kleinsasser Glanzer. Children: Alan, Joseph, Sidney, Joyce Palmateer; 15 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 15 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

**Horst, Ray Ernest**, 89, Elkhart, Ind., died July 20. Spouse: Ruth Brunk Horst. Parents: Titus S. and Mary Landis Horst. Children: Carolyn Heydon, Ray Edward, Jean Luadzers; eight grandchildren. Funeral: July 29 at Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

**Mast, Ellis Dale**, 73, Goshen, Ind., died June 28, of a heart attack. Spouse: Ann Smucker Mast. Parents: Paul and Beulah Miller Mast. Children: Michele Stutzman, Angela Miller; five grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Meck, Howard**, 93, Wauseon, Ohio, died June 25. Spouse: Helen Roth Meck. Parents: Clarence and Mable Resh Meck. Children: Don, Mary Lou Heck, Marvin Rohrer-Meck, Mabel McFarland, Linda Yoder, Dorothy Sue Meck; 16 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: June 29 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**Mohr, Henry Theodore**, 93, Allentown, Pa., died July 5. Spouse: Bessie Hemphill Mohr (deceased). Spouse: Florence Gunkle Mohr (deceased). Spouse: Emma Rice Mohr (deceased). Parents: Lawrence D. and Susan H. Shantz Mohr. Children: Sylvia Hilmer, Susan Mohr, Sharon Rider, Roger, Lisa H. Mohlman; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: July 10 at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Old Zionsville, Pa.

**Musselman, Grace Schlosser**, 90, Souderton, Pa., died July 20. Spouse: Homer D. Musselman. Parents: Irwin C. and Lizzie Landes Schlosser. Children: Roy, Linda Gehman, Betsy McCrorie; 13 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 24 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

**Neufeld, Adolf W.**, 93, Inman, Kan., died July 13. Spouse: Wanda Marie Reber Neufeld (deceased). Parents: Peter T. and Lena Wiens Neufeld. Child: Marilyn Marshall; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 23 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**Neufeld, Willie D.**, 90, Inman, Kan., died May 13. Spouse: Ida K. Schierling Neufeld (deceased). Parents: Abraham F. and Marie W. Doerksen Neufeld. Children: Jerald, Stanley; four grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

**Nisly, Frances**, 79, Hartville, Ohio, died June 18. Parents: John and Lizzie Miller Nisly. Funeral: June 22 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

**Schertz, Vernon E.**, 88, Atlanta, Ga., died June 24, of an aortic aneurysm. Spouse: Eleanor M. Milam Schertz. Spouse: Betty Lewis Schertz (deceased). Parents: Emanuel J. and Lena M. Drange Schertz. Children: Vera Agonafer, Irene Schertz, Stephen, Susan Moreno, V. Eric; 13 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at Berea Mennonite Church, Atlanta.

**Shaum, James E.**, 85, Engadine, Mich., died June 12, following a stroke. Spouse: Esther Troyer Shaum. Parents: Henry and Susanna Witmer Shaum. Children: Donita Wheeler, Suetta Hollinger; three grandchildren. Funeral: June 18 at Wildwood Mennonite Church, Engadine.

**Short, R. Dean**, 81, Archbold, Ohio, died July 7. Spouse: Esther Yoder Short. Parents: Clarence and Mary Schmucker Short. Child: Sam D.; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: July 11 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

**Smith, Pearl C. Clemmer**, 93, Hilltown Twp., Pa., died July 1. Spouse: Walter J. Smith. Parents: Jonas and Mamie Moyer Clemmer. Child: Carolyn Landis; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Memorial service: July 15 at Rockhill Mennonite Community Chapel, Sellersville, Pa.

**Studer, Gerald C.**, 86, Lansdale, Pa., died Aug. 1. Spouse: Marilyn Kreider Studer (deceased). Parents: Martin Gotleib Studer and Edna Lucille Blough Studer. Children: Jerri Longacre, Maria Fluck; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

**Swartzendruber, Alda Burkey**, 97, Newton, Kan., died June 27. Spouse: Lloyd Swartzendruber (deceased). Parents: Arthur and Amanda Stutzman Burkey. Children: Rosie Roberson, Arthur; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral service: July 2 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

**Weaver, June Marie Collins**, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Kenneth J. Weaver. Parents: Edward Clarence and Edith Blough Collins. Children: Carol Eberly, Jim, Bill, Don; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 6 Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

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## RESOURCES

**Created and Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations,** edited by Mary Sue Dehmlow Dreier (Eerdmans, 2013, $26), includes essays by nine contributors—many of them experienced church-planting pastors—who offer diverse yet cohesive perspectives on the Spirit's missional church planting in our time. This is the fifth volume in the Missional Church Series.

**Touching Godliness** by K.P. Yohannan (GFA Books, 2013, $14.99) challenges readers to touch godliness by following Jesus down the path of total surrender and submission. It includes a study guide.

**Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice and Life Together,** edited by Steve Heinrichs (Herald Press, 2013, $21.99), offers up alternative histories, radical theologies and poetic, life-giving memories that can unsettle our souls and work toward reconciliation. The book showcases a variety of voices—traditional and Christian, native and non-native.

**God's Story, Our Story: Exploring Christian Faith and Life** by Michele Hershberger (Herald Press, 2013, $13.99) explores the elements of Christian faith and life for those considering baptism or church membership. This revised edition addresses the essential issues of faith through an engaging survey of the biblical story and how God continues to work among us.

**No Strings Attached: Boundary Lines in Pleasant Places** by Rachel Nafziger Hartzler with contributions by Sara Yoder VonGunten and Leona Doell Yoder (Wipf and Stock, 2013, $38) is a history of Warren Street/Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church in Middlebury, Ind., which existed for 86 years. The congregation began during the social and religious turmoil of the 1920s, when some Mennonites held to rigid doctrines and ethics implemented by central authority, while others operated with a congregational polity and became more assimilated into secular culture.

**Reading the Passion Stories with Heart and Mind** by Wes Bergen (Lighthouse Christian Publishing, 2013, $7.95) looks at the stories of Jesus' death spiritually and intellectually. It asks difficult intellectual questions and how these texts relate to one's life.

**You Are Not Going to Heaven (and Why It Doesn't Matter)** by Wes Bergen (Wipf and Stock, 2013, $20) contends that salvation is something that either happens here and now, on this earth, or not at all. Salvation is something that happens to bodies. More importantly, salvation is something that either will happen on this earth or we risk making the world uninhabitable by human beings. The Bible is not a manual for getting to heaven.

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◆ ◆ ◆

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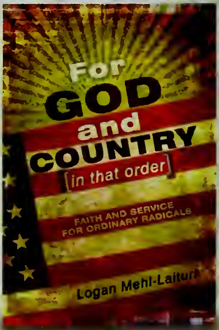

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**Is there a Mennonite spirituality?** Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

***Johann***, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

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- **ISRAEL/PALESTINE** with Pastor David Boshart (April 24-May 3/2014)
- **HOLY LAND TOUR** with Pastor Darrel Toews (Oct 19-28/2014)
- **FROM NAZARETH to ROME** with Pastor Jim Brown (Nov 3-15/2014)
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- **INDIA: HISTORY, CHANGE and the CHURCH** (Oct 6-21/2013)
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- **POLAND & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY** (Sept 18-Oct 1/2014)
- **RUSSIA & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY** (May 19-June 6/2015)
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# Questions for the church

**Peter Epp** teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba. He can be reached at p_epp@hotmail.com

Four months ago, I wrote an article (*The Mennonite*, May) on young Mennonites that gave me the small thrill of what it might feel like to go viral—at least in the Mennonite world. It showed up on Facebook walls other than my partner Shanda's. It showed up on friends' parents' Facebook walls. It even showed up on a childhood crush's Facebook wall. And just when I asked, May I call this 'Mennonite viral'? (Shanda, for the record, answers no), it was linked by a respected blogger, a discussion group of some of my most intelligent former students and some self-proclaimed Mennonite heretics. I even got an email from a Lutheran minister and a great uncle I've always aspired to write like. He wanted to make sure we could chat at the next family gathering about what I'd written.

The message many seemed to take from the article was, Young adults are failing their hard-working church—which is definitely part of what I think. But the strange thing about writing a column is that few of the readers are your uncle. You won't have a chance to sit down with them over dinner to listen and add your other—sometimes even contradictory—thoughts on the matter.

> Are we asking the hard questions?

Many of my further thoughts are questions for the church, some of them rhetorical and some of them not. I ask them because I don't think we ask them often enough. Or if we do, we don't seem to have found a way to address them with concerted individual, congregational and conference efforts and strategies. Here are four of them:

**1. How many of our resources are we investing in efforts that directly address our loss of young adults?** Over the past decades, we've developed an approach that invests a lot of capital in our youth and in our institutional programs. For some reason, though, we're seeing fewer and fewer youth make the leap from their youth groups to our institutions. Are we adapting to address that? Do we have conference staff with a significant part of their mandate dedicated to bridging that gap, or are young adults simply something we add to the side of our already busy youth staffs' positions? Furthermore, when young adult groups spring up to work on this themselves, are we prepared to give them the resources they need to make a difference?

**2. How radical are we wiling to be?** It's been well-documented that our society is going through a major shift in its attitudes toward many things, especially religion, and that Millennials (those born after 1980) have some major differences from Baby Boomers. When we picture our future, is it one where we protect the Baby Boomers' vision or where we embrace the opportunities (and address the new challenges) facing Millennials? Are we making ourselves more agile in order to be ready for change, or are we digging in our heels?

**3. Are we building a church that truly reflects the challenges and opportunities of the changing society around us?** Our neighborhoods, schools and workplaces are increasingly diverse. For young adults, building community with people from different backgrounds and realities is no longer just optional; it's essential. When we come to church, are we finding a community that includes and explores that landscape with us or one that just tries to minimize its jagged edges?

**4. Are we investing in the expertise of our Mennonite elementary, middle and high schools?** I recognize that this may seem to contradict #1, but Mennonite schools have always been on the front lines of our efforts to give our young people a foundation they'll never want to leave. They've been honing these abilities for decades, and they're constantly adjusting to the shifting needs and attitudes of new generations. When we choose where our children go to school or where our donation dollars go, are we valuing these institutions as much as we should?

As a high school Mennonite studies teacher, I try to focus my students on the question, Do you want to be the generation that loses this faith community or enhances it? When I leave the classroom, however, I'm sometimes disheartened by the task I've thrown at them. Are the rest of us even prepared for them to say yes? Are we asking the hard questions, studying models that could answer them and making a plan to move forward? Or are we quick to "like" an article about their need to take responsibility but still a bit slow to take our own? TM

## FILM REVIEW

**Frances Ha** (R) is an art film, shot in black and white, that centers on Frances (Greta Gerwig), a kind of lost soul in New York without an apartment, an apprentice for a dance company who wants to be a dancer. She has dreams but seems unable to follow through on what she needs to do. This funny film is also touching in its depiction of her search for a solid, unconditional love.—*Gordon Houser*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Taking Jesus at His Word: What Jesus Really Said in the Sermon on the Mount** by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) is addressed to Christians and non-Christians. Hart says it is not a book of doctrinal argument but of "sitting before Jesus, asking him about living life, listening to him and taking notes." Hart's approach is honest and full of insights. For example, he writes, "keeping ourselves salty means being authentic, doing what we do invisibly as unto God."—*gh*

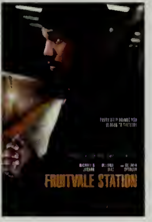
**Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship** by Bruce Ellis Benson (BakerAcademic, 2013, $17.99) argues that "God has called *all of us* to be 'artists' [and] that being an artist is *not* something just for the few, some select group of 'artistically inclined,' rarefied folk." Benson contends that life is improvisational, that "our very lives should be seen *as* art and that we should live *liturgically* in service to God and neighbor." This is helpful, but in generalizing "art," he weakens the distinctive skills and calling of artists.—*gh*

**Mothering Mennonite**, edited by Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast (Demeter Press, 2013, $34.99) is the first scholarly attempt to incorporate religious groundings in interpretations of motherhood. The 17 essays address the roles of mothering in Mennonite contexts and how Mennonite mothering intersects with the larger world. The book includes poetry, memoir and reflection from a variety of viewpoints.—*gh*

# An African-American male as a human

In the early hours of Jan. 1, 2009, Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old African-American man, was shot in the back while being held by police at Fruitvale Station in Oakland, Calif. He later died. In the days and weeks following, Grant was alternately labeled a saint or a villain, a loving father or a drug dealer. Ryan Coogler's extraordinary debut film shows that he was actually a complicated human being.

What makes the film *Fruitvale Station* important is that it avoids the polarizing, simplistic notion that a person is only either a saint or a villain. Coogler shows Grant's humanity: He is a loving father and a convicted felon; he loves his girlfriend but cheated on her; he loves his mother but lies to her.



**The film opens** with a cellphone video taken by a bystander of the actual Oscar Grant being shot. Then we switch to Dec. 31, 2008, the last day of his life, and watch Michael B. Jordan's remarkable portrayal of Grant.

On the verge of a new year and only three months out of prison, Oscar is looking to change his life, to begin anew. He tells his girlfriend, Sophina (Melonie Diaz), that he is committed to her and their daughter, Tatiana (Ariana Neal).

After dropping off Tatiana at preschool and Sophina at work, he goes to a grocery to try to get his job back. He's been fired for showing up late, though he hasn't told Sophina or his mother (Octavia Spencer) this. He says to his former boss, "You want me to sell drugs?"

Oscar has an easygoing nature, and Coogler uses the device of showing his cellphone texts to portray his quick navigation of relationships as he moves from one difficulty to another. We witness his struggle to be a better person in the face of systemic forces that try to hold him back. Finding legal work to support him and his family poses a huge problem.

All the while, as he seeks to change, as he expresses his delight in Tatiana and his affection for Sophina, our gut wrenches because we know what's coming.

Oscar and his friends are on the train after celebrating the New Year, when a white thug he encountered while in prison baits him into a fight. Later, the police are called and hold Oscar and several of his friends on the platform, and a white officer, struggling to handcuff Oscar, shoots him. (He later claimed he thought he was grabbing his Taser instead of his gun, and he served 11 months in prison.)

**Coogler has created** not only an important film but an excellent film. He shows the complicated humanity behind the stereotype of the young African-American male. The film's pace, editing, acting and writing are superb, and we come away sad and angry about one more wasted life because we've come to know this man—his aspirations, his struggles, his potential.

That the film was released around the time of the Trayvon Martin trial was unintentional yet raises many parallels. A young African-American male, killed by someone overreacting with a gun. Still, Coogler steers clear of racial polarizing. Oscar has several positive interactions with whites.

*Fruitvale Station* succeeds in portraying a specific human in his realistic complexity, and that story resonates with us viewers who see Oscar's tragic death as something that affects us all. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

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# God sightings at a family gathering

*I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*—2 Timothy 1:5 NIV

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul gives credit to a parent and grandparent of his young mentee. Paul implies that habits of faithfulness can be passed from one generation to the next. Perhaps it's more than a coincidence that I'm noticing this since Bonnie and I now have two grandchildren of our own.

My noticing also has to do with my recent participation in the sixth quinquennial national gathering of the Jacob Hochstetler Family Association. Jacob Hochstetler was a 1738 Amish immigrant to Pennsylvania. The weekend was a family gathering on steroids, featuring plenary speakers, exhibits, genealogical releases, books and mementos, workshops and an official business meeting. I also followed through on the offer to see the last home and burial place of Jacob's son, Joseph, who died more than two centuries ago in Juniata County, Pa.

As we registered for the Hochstetler gathering, we were invited to place a little star on our name tag under the heading of one or more of Jacob's four children—John, Barbara, Joseph, Christian—to indicate our line(s) of descent. That meant I got to paste three stars on my registration tag; I'm a direct descendant of three of Jacob's children.

In a plenary session at the Hochstetler gathering, one of the speakers commented that we wouldn't likely be gathering as a group had it not been for a specific act of faith or conscience on the part of our ancestor. Because of Jacob's belief in nonresistance, he refused to shoot at the warriors outside his home during the French and Indian War. He has become an icon of faith among his Anabaptist descendants.

**I am so fascinated with the life** of my ancestor and his family that I am writing a series of three historical novels about them. The first one, *Jacob's Choice*, is scheduled for publication by Herald Press in the spring of 2014.

Studying about this ancestor and the events his church community faced during the French and Indian War has been a profound spiritual journey for me. More than ever, I am convinced that we are called to acknowledge not only our ancestors' faithfulness to God but God's faithfulness to them. If we open our eyes to the work of God in history, we can see God's actions shine forth in our genealogies.

**Yes, I said genealogies.** Have you ever taken the time to ponder the many genealogical lists in Scripture? Most times they are accompanied by fascinating narratives, i.e. the book of Numbers. Some of the lists offer praise or blame regarding the life of an ancestor. But what strikes me most deeply is that the ancestors are included regardless of their praiseworthiness. Some fell far short of God's ideals.

Consider the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17. Note that four women are mentioned in this list among the preponderance of men. All four were either outsiders to Jewish faith (Rahab, Ruth and Uriah's wife [Bathsheba]) or they conceived a child out of wedlock by an ancestor of Jesus (Tamar and Bathsheba). Perhaps this list was one of Matthew's ways of showing that Jesus would raise up a family of faith that included people with less-than-ideal birth circumstances.

If we open our eyes, we may make plenty of God sightings in the pages of our own genealogy books.

If you read carefully through the Old Testament, this may indeed be the rule rather than the exception. God is the ultimate hero of all the biblical stories of God's people. In the same way, if we open our eyes, we may make plenty of God sightings in the pages of our own genealogy books, especially if we are willing to read between the lines. That's in essence what Paul was inviting Timothy to do. TM

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# Stealing wages

Everett J. Thomas

*You shall not steal.*—Exodus 20:15

Labor Day does not seem to be much about labor—unless it's cleaning out the garage or working in the yard. But this year on Labor Day, consider the victims of wage theft. This is something I knew little about until Kim Bobo, founder of Interfaith Worker Justice, spoke at the 2012 Associated Church Press convention. She also was interviewed in the June issue of *U.S. Catholic*.

"Wage theft is when employers illegally don't pay workers for all their hours or don't pay them for all their work," Bobo said.

Here is what I learned from Bobo: The most common form of wage theft is not paying the minimum wage; the federal level is currently $7.25 an hour. According to a large study Bobo cited, one quarter of workers earning less than $10/hour get paid less than the minimum wage.

However, the biggest form of wage theft is in not paying overtime. The same study of low-wage workers showed that of those working more than 40 hours a week, three out of four do not get paid overtime.

Evaluate to what extent our participation in the economy means we are contributing to wage theft.

But there are other forms of wage theft. In order to avoid paying taxes, FICA and Social Security, some employers call their workers "independent contractors." This means the worker has to pay both the employer's and the employee's payroll taxes and has no worker's compensation or unemployment insurance. Bobo said she's seen dishwashers in the backs of restaurants called independent contractors.

"If you get up in the morning," Bobo said, "... and say to yourself, 'I'm going to work for myself,' then you're an independent contractor. If you get up in the morning and say, 'I'm going to work for Mr. Smith,' you're an employee."

Then there is the problem with tips: One out of 10 waiters do not get all their tips.

"If you put your tip on a credit card," Bobo said, "you cannot be sure the worker will actually get it. We always tell people to pay their tips in cash if they don't know for sure."

Of course, the downside to tipping in cash is that the worker may not report the income in order to avoid paying taxes on it.

What else can we do to prevent wage theft?

If we pay attention to the way large corporations, especially, treat their employees, we can support those who treat their employees well. For example, Costco has a history of providing excellent pay and benefits for its employees and having a good work environment. On the other hand, Wal-Mart has a history of cheating its workers, paying low wages and offering few benefits, Bobo said.

Further complicating the ethics of participating in the economy is the terrible working conditions in places like China and Bangladesh. While it may seem good stewardship to spend less for clothing, for example, we can read the label to see where an item was made. Doing so may help us imagine the child labor, unconscionably low wages and terrible working conditions demanded by the manufacturer that enable prices so low.

Labor Day may be the symbolic end of summer. But it can also be a day to reflect on the human energy expended each day to provide us the essentials of life. It can also be a day to evaluate to what extent our participation in the economy means we are complicit in violating the eighth of the Ten Commandments.—*ejt*

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- Jesus in the temple
- Outside the box
- Access and assess
- Read it, study it, pray it, live it

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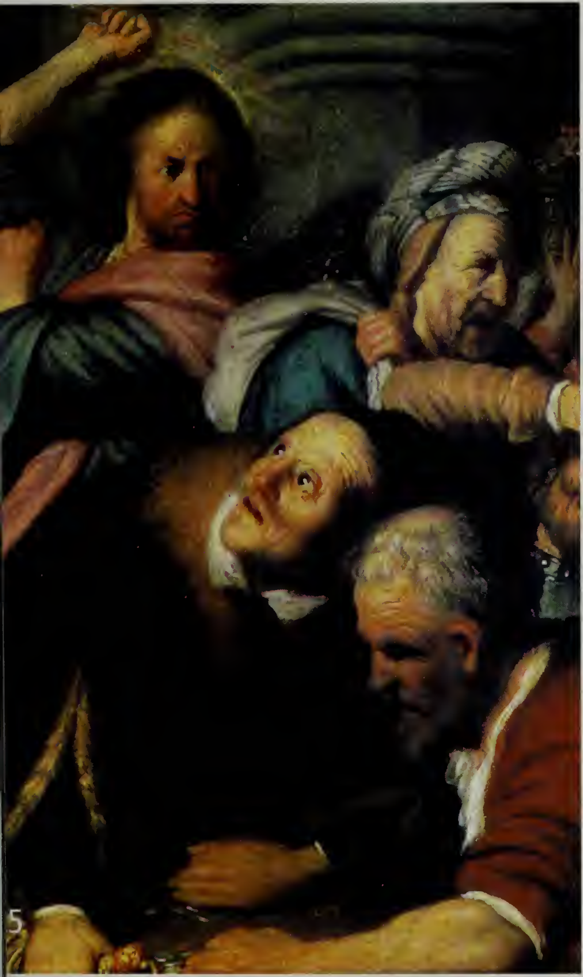

ON THE COVER: Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

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*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite*, or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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**Lois Gunden, righteous Gentile**

Thanks for the nice coverage of Lois Gunden Clemens in your September issue. You mention she was "perhaps the only Mennonite named by Yad Vashem." She was not the only such. Alle Hoekema, a Dutch Mennonite pastor and historian, spoke at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., last summer. He mentioned a Dutch Mennonite pastor, Lenie Leignes Bakhoven, who was named as Righteous Among the Nations posthumously in 2000. He tells the story of "Dutch Mennonites and German Jewish Refugee Children, 1938-1945" in the April issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

Many Dutch were active in the resistance to the German occupation and its treatment of the Jews. This witness by many Dutch Christians is an important part of modern church history. *—John A. Lapp, Goshen, Ind.*

Thank you for the information about Lois Gunden Clemens. John Lapp informed me about her and her work on behalf of Jewish people in France. We still have not found all the names of Dutch Mennonites who have been recognized by the Yad Vashem organization, partly because not all of them did their work in a clear Mennonite context. However, I know the names of some of them: pastor Lenie Leignes Bakhoven, Mrs. Nieuwenhuizen, pastor S. Mesdag and his wife, pastor A.H van Drooge, Johanna Schipper-Kuiper and Mrs. Stien Warner-Swart.

I will have to search the Yad Vashem commemoration book to find out if other Dutch Mennonites are on the list (not so easy, since their names are not typically "Mennonite" names).—*Alle Hoekema, Haarlem, Netherlands*

**Like a man?**

I hadn't read *The Mennonite* for years but decided to pick up a copy from the back of our church. How surprised and pleased I was to find an article about same-sex attraction within the magazine's pages (September). I'm thankful to be part of the Mennonite church as we continue on our journey to seek truth, forgo judgement, have compassion and deepen our faith.

My heart and tears go out to the writer. I will remember him in my prayers and ask for his prayers as we all strive to gain clarity on the many issues facing our world. I appreciated his vulnerability, honesty and for sharing his convictions. His congregation is lucky to have him as a member. No matter how his struggle unfolds, I support him as a human being who has great integrity. May the God of love continue to bless him on his journey. *—Pam Piper-Ruth, Boise, Idaho*

I would like to thank the author of the article "Like a Man?" for sharing his hopes and struggles. His perspective and convictions stand confronting the overwhelming momentum of our culture's sexual revolution. In the face of our society's profound sexual ethic shifts of recent decades, it is tempting to simply shrug our shoulders and go with the flow. We can clearly see where our culture at large is heading in regards to sexual principles and understandings of marriage, but what is God calling us to as his church? I, for one, resonate with this author's call to walk a "loving, gentle, middle path," recognizing our need for "grace and truth … compassion and principles."—*David Lehman, Toano, Va.*

Thanks to you and the author for sharing the article "Like a Man?" by Anonymous. I experienced it as a beautiful, authentic witness of one who has embraced a costly discipleship that has resulted in a continual growing relationship of intimacy with our Lord. *—Harold L. Mast, Converse, Ind.*

We enjoyed and affirm the article "Like a Man?" His conclusion, "I have come to believe that same-sex attraction is in itself not a sin, but acting out of that temptation is a sin. ... Since the tendency to live outside biblical boundaries is common to us all, let's surround one another with love and accountability." Well said.

Can and should we as disciples of Jesus Christ really love ourselves and others if we bless a sinful lifestyle? Will we be held accountable if we fail to teach and live out the whole truth as Christ taught?*—Paul and Lois King, Sarasota, Fla.*

Thank you so much for printing "Like a Man?" I applaud the courage of this person to share so openly of his ongoing pain and struggle with same-sex attraction, to be vulnerable to a community of faith that has tended to polarize at opposing ends of the spectrum and to present the unpopular third way of sacrificial obedience. This is the kind of person that serves as a model of applied faith, submission and confidence to a living God who stands by his word, lovingly walks with his children in unpopular places and will reward costly obedience. Hopefully this is the kind of person the church will honor, encourage, support and to and for whom it will be accountable. Thanks again.*—Doris Diener, Sarasota, Fla.*

I want to send a deep, heartfelt thanks for printing my article "Like a Man?" I pray that others who experience unwanted same-sex attraction—and who are living in almost-complete secrecy, as I did for many years—will have the courage to step forward and seek help. Blessings on your continued work and ministry.*—Anonymous*

### Edgy Mennonite blogs

The article about "edgy Mennonite blogs" (September) includes at least two blogs that are contrary to the doctrinal positions of the confession of faith of Mennonite Church USA. I am concerned that the magazine of the denomination would be promoting these blogs. While I can understand hearing from various voices, I believe it is important that agreed-upon doctrinal stances of the denomination as well as biblical standards be encouraged through the voice of the denomination.

The original Anabaptists were truly "radical" in the fullest sense of the word—meaning "returning to the root." They were seeking to return to the teachings of the Christ, the church and biblical standards. They were not "edgy" for the sake of pushing the boundaries.*— Scott Franciscus, Lansdale, Pa.*

I enjoyed reading Anna Groff's compilation of websites by fellow Mennonites and would like to add another to the list:

Kingdom of God flag
kingdomofgodflag.info
Launch year: 2008
Who started it: Scott Smith

Purpose: Originally created to propose a flag to represent the kingdom of God, it has evolved into an apologetic for Christian pacifism, a critique of patriotism/nationalism and a commentary on the "Christian nation" debate.

Audience: The intended audience is Christian patriots/militarists as well as pacifist Christians who face questions from the previous group.

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Staff members at Mennonite Church USA's Archives have many photos and stories from the past that serve as reminders of others who have gone before us. Until recently, they attempted to share some of this church history through the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. But in the face of a tightening budget, the *Bulletin* was discontinued. In its place is the theme section offered in this issue (pages 18-24). The two stories are about the Partly Dave coffee house in Elkhart, Ind., in the 1970s and the Guest House and Cafeteria operated by J. Winfield Fretz that served as a social hub in Newton, Kan. until 1972.

In this issue we also publish two pieces related to the burgeoning interest and investigation into how former Mennonite Church leaders responded to allegations of sexual abuse by seminary professor John Howard Yoder. The news section reports on a discernment committee established by Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman and Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart. In forming the committee, Stutzman proposed that it work toward "a denominational response to the painful and complex legacy of sexual abuse perpetrated by John Howard Yoder." In News Analysis (page 44), we ask questions of Tom Price, *The Elkhart Truth* reporter who broke the silence around the Yoder story with his secular reporting.

Each year, our associate editors each take a turn with the editorial (page 56). This month, associate editor Gordon Houser writes about what shapes us and calls us to read, study, pray and live the Scriptures. He attended the launch of the Year of the Bible in August and found inspiration there. For more information about this focus, visit yearofthebiblenetwork.org.*—Editor*

## Plans underway for KC2015 convention

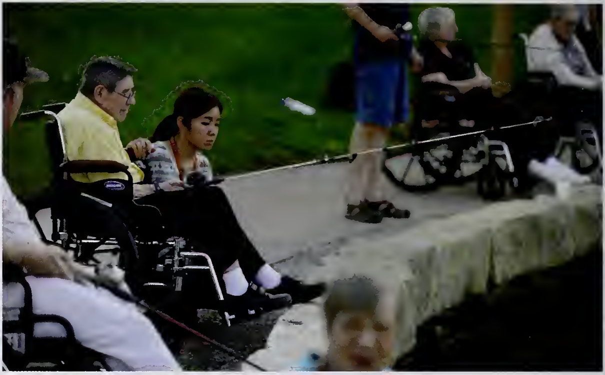
ELKHART, Ind.—Buoyed by the spirit of prayer that marked the end of the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix in July—when thousands of Mennonites participated in a prayer walk—convention planners are setting their sights on Kansas City, Mo., the location of the next biennial convention, to be held June 30–July 5, 2015.

With the 16th Mennonite World Conference Assembly occurring later in July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pa., convention planners say they want to celebrate the international character of the Mennonite church and highlight global connections during the gathering in Kansas City, which they anticipate will draw Mennonites and Anabaptist-minded people from across the country and around the world.

"We'll be working closely with Mennonite Mission Network to make it possible for international partners and friends to join in worship and work at convention," says Glen Guyton, director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA. "There will also be learning experiences devoted to learning from and with our international guests."

Hannah Heinzekehr, director of communications for Mennonite Church USA, notes that offsite learning experiences—as well as servant projects in collaboration with local organizations—will give convention participants a taste of the rich history and culture of Kansas City (pop. 459,787, according to the 2010 census).

In preparation for KC2015, Guyton invites members of Mennonite Church USA congregations to dig into the convention week's theme text—the entire chapter of Luke 24—over the next two years.—*Mennonite Church USA*


Larry Bartel, Hesston College

## Service week at Hesston College

Hesston (Kan.) College freshman Misaki Murakami (Osaka, Japan) fishes with Schowalter Villa resident Allen Bitikofer at Lake Vista on Sept. 3 as part of Hesston College's Service Week Sept. 3-7. Students have the opportunity to serve in various ways on campus and in the local community, including spending time with elderly residents at neighboring Schowalter Villa and the Hesston Area Senior Center, painting and cleaning at the Harvey County Homeless Shelter in Newton, serving meals at the Lord's Diner in Wichita, Kan., and packaging books for the Ethiopia Reads project.—*Hesston College*

## Everence and Praxis commit $2 million to new World Bank Green Bond

GOSHEN, Ind.—Everence Association and the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund have committed $2 million (or $1 million each) in the latest Green Bond offering from the World Bank.

In total, 17 investors—including Everence and Praxis—have invested in this latest Green Bond offering. Proceeds from the Green Bond will be used to provide global solutions to climate change as well as economic opportunities and higher standards of living for people in developing countries. Examples of these opportunities supported by these bonds include off-grid solar and wind installations, greater efficiency in transportation, waste management, energy efficient housing construction, carbon reduction through reforestation and deforestation prevention, protection against floods through reforestation, food security improvement and stress-resilient crops.

The World Bank has issued approximately $4 billion in Green Bonds since their introduction in 2008. The World Bank is a global development cooperative owned by 186 member countries whose goal is to help overcome poverty and improve standards of living for people worldwide.—*Everence*

## Willis Horst, long-time mission worker, dies

GOSHEN, Ind.—Willis Gabriel Horst, 74, died at home on Sept. 1 in Goshen.

His 38 years of ministry with his wife, Byrdalene, are characterized by a willingness to be a guest and learner as he lived and worked alongside the Toba Qom, Pilagá and Moqoit people of Argentina.

In 1971, the Horsts arrived in the Chaco region of northern Argentina to serve with Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network. The existing ministry work in the area aimed to strengthen ethnic identity and encourage truly indigenous expressions of church life.

The Horsts gave leadership to the Mennonite ministry as it expanded to become an international and interdenominational team. The team members related to indigenous congregations as equals walking together and finding Jesus in each other's stories. They did not plant Mennonite churches but supported indigenous churches as they discovered gifts, unique worship styles and theology.

Horst was born July 4, 1939, to Susie I. (Good) and Clarence K. Horst near Seville, Ohio. He studied at Goshen College and Goshen Biblical Seminary. On July 4, 1964, Horst married Byrdalene Wyse of Archbold, Ohio.

Beginning in 1964, the Horsts spent three years working on a Navajo reservation. Then, after two summers of linguistics training and one year of Spanish language study in Costa Rica, they left for Argentina in 1971 and served there until they retired to the United States in 2009.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

## EMU achieves record enrollment for fall

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Enrollment increased this fall by 8 percent over the previous fall at Eastern Mennonite University, counting all students enrolled in for-credit coursework. The numbers rose from 1,519 to 1,640, a record enrollment for EMU.

In traditional undergraduate population, there was a 2 percent increase, from 912 to 929 students, based on head counts in early September 2012 and 2013.

The older-adult group was heavily concentrated in graduate education outside the seminary, with the total number of students in six master's programs increasing by 27 percent, from 271 to 343 students.

Two new master's degree programs—in nursing (online) and in biomedicine—contributed heavily to the increase, with the former accounting for 61 students, 74 percent more than the previous year, and the latter accounting for 22 students, three times more than were enrolled the previous year, its first year of operation.—*EMU*

## AMBS alumni honored for ministries of peace

ELKHART, Ind.—Kathy Bergen, recently of Ramallah in Israel-Palestine, and Marty Troyer, a pastor in Houston, share a breadth of ministries related to peace as Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) honors them this month with this year's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition.

Bergen's 30 years of ministry has been in and for Israel-Palestine. She graduated from AMBS in 1982 and later worked with Mennonite Central Committee in local Palestinian communities and the Israeli peace movement. Since 1991, she has worked on Middle East issues with the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends International Center in Ramallah.

Troyer, who graduated from AMBS with a Master of Divinity degree in 2008, is pastor of Houston Mennonite Church. He is also involved in a local missional faith formation community called FaithWalking and has a writing ministry, including the launch two years ago of "The Peace Pastor" blog for *The Houston Chronicle*.—*AMBS*

MDS photo/Laurie Oswald Robinson

**Working together**

Jason (left) and Mennonite Disaster Service volunteer Leonard Penner fit wall boards to the frame of Jason's house in Cloquet, Minn. Jason's family lost their house twice—once after a flash flood in June 2012 flooded the basement and the resulting mold left the home uninhabitable, and again in March when a fire burned the house to the ground. Six congregations in Goshen, Ind., helped build Jason's family's home.—*MDS*

Everett J. Thomas

**Diversity in denominational leadership**

During a joint meeting of the Executive Board and Governance Council on Sept. 17 at Camp Deerpark in upstate New York, Mennonite Church USA moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht asked all people of color to stand to recognize "how far we have come" in developing racial and ethnic diversity in denominational leadership. Seven of 18 Executive Board members are leaders of color.—*Everett J. Thomas*

# 'Tell me a story'

**Sara Dick**
is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

I wonder how many of us still get this request from children in an age of games and TV-on-demand and virtual reality. Yet telling stories is an essential part of human culture and the foundation of our faith, in the form of Scripture, testimony and teaching.

Even tech-saturated youth long to tell their stories—the everyday and the "epic"—if not to their parents and caregivers at the end of the school day, then to their friends via text messages or to their mentors over coffee.

October is storytelling month, according to my 2013 wall calendar, and I'm pondering how to celebrate. I'm not very good at making up stories, so retelling Bible stories may be a fine place to begin the celebration.

We've got two creation stories, the great flood, Hagar's tribulations, the angels' visit to Abraham and Sarah, the adventures and misadventures of David, Samuel's nighttime calling, and I haven't even gotten halfway through the Hebrew Bible, let alone to the New Testament stories.

Sacred and complex stories from Scripture aren't the only way to celebrate. Aesop's fables and family memories and, "You won't believe what happened to me today" stories count, too.

"Stories, no matter how simple, can be vehicles of truth," writes Madeleine L'Engle in *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*. L'Engle was one of my favorite authors as a child, so I take her views on storytelling seriously now as an adult. "It's no coincidence that Jesus taught almost entirely by telling stories, simple stories dealing with the stuff of life familiar to the Jews of his day" she writes.

Tell me your life story, the joyful parts and the sorrowful parts, and we'll honor and cherish them together.

**Jesus mostly made up stories** to help people understand his teachings: He told the story of the sower to illustrate how God's word is spread and (sometimes) bears fruit. He told the story of the Good Samaritan when a lawyer asked, "And who is my neighbor?" He told stories about seeds and trees and yeast to describe the kingdom of God. He told the story of the wicked tenants to point out the treachery of the religious leaders of his day.

Jesus told stories, and he also was the story. The Gospel of John begins, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." From this passage in John, I imagine the Spirit of God in Genesis longing to tell a story through words that created all: "Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

L'Engle writes: "Stories are able to help us become more whole, to become Named. And Naming is one of the impulses behind all art; to give a name to the cosmos we see despite all the chaos."

Exactly. In Genesis 1, God names the cosmos into being out of the chaos. And in Genesis 2, the earthling is privileged to name "every animal of the field and every bird of the air" as God creates them. From the beginning, God and humankind spoke to create meaning.

**We need to tell stories**, our own as well as those that help us make sense of the world around us. Book clubs, Bible study groups and open mic nights help us "become Named" and "make some small sense of the confusions and complications of life," as L'Engle wrote back in 1972.

L'Engle couldn't have predicted the proliferation of memoirs we have today, but she understood that good stories are essential—and by good here I mean true and deep and beautiful. We need to tell and hear good stories in order to become as fully human as Jesus was.

But what happens when a story is stuck within or censored from without?

"There is no agony like having an untold story inside you." This quote attributed to African-American author Zora Neale Hurston tops each page of the Web site ourstoriesuntold.com, a site that addresses sexual violence in the Mennonite church. The Divine's desire for incarnation is also the artist's desire for expression and the abuse survivor's desire for sharing stories of violation and healing.

Mary Pellauer says in *God's Fierce Whimsy*, "If there's anything worth calling theology, it is listening to people's stories—listening to them and honoring and cherishing them, and asking them to become even more brightly beautiful than they already are."

So tell me a story, and I'll tell you one, too. Tell me your life story, the joyful parts and the sorrowful parts, and we'll honor and cherish them together.

*This is a story full of love,*
*a song to set us free,*
*of God, the Wisdom and the Word,*
*the Keystone and the Key.*
(Hymnal: A Worship Book, #315) TM

# A model of daily, faithful service

I had been planning the trip to the Philippines and India for several months, eagerly anticipating a firsthand encounter with people and churches that I knew only through impressions gleaned from books, articles and emails. As it turned out, however, local realities disrupted my international plans. Two days before my scheduled departure it became clear that my mother-in-law, Mattie Miller, was in her final stages of her life.

In the week that followed I thought a lot about the global church through the lens of the grief associated with Mattie's death and the disappointment of a cancelled trip. A primary goal of the trip had been to meet with two people: Regina Mondez, a peace worker with the Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines, and C.S. Joel, a teacher at the Mennonite Brethren Church seminary in Shamshabad, India. Both had been appointed by their national churches as research associates for the Mennonite World Conference "Global Anabaptist Profile," but their visa requests to attend a planning conference in the United States had been denied. So the trip was a chance to discuss their role in a major research project while also giving me a firsthand introduction to their churches and cultural context.

**By most standards**, Mattie had almost nothing in common with Regina Mondez, C.S. Joel or the global church. Born into an Amish family in Holmes County, Ohio, at the height of the First World War, she completed her formal education at grade eight and lived her entire life within a 15-mile radius of her childhood home. She died on Aug. 18 at the age of 95, and the friends and family who gathered a week later to celebrate her long life remembered the delight she took in the local and the particular: sharing produce from her bountiful garden, serving in her local congregation, stitching quilts for the Ohio Relief Sale and spending years of faithful service at the local MCC Save & Serve store.

Yet even though her feet were firmly planted in the soil of Holmes County, Mattie's heart was open to the world. Her perspective was never limited by geography. Mattie recognized the divine image of God in everyone she encountered, and she embraced them with open arms. A vast network of folks from the wrong side of town remember her warm generosity; a Japanese exchange student from Malone knew he was welcome into her home; an African-American teenager from Pittsburgh found deep love and acceptance under her roof. Mattie owned a passport. And if a family member serving the church in some distant land worked out the details, she was open to travel: to Haiti, Puerto Rico, Germany, Mexico, Costa Rica.

The small, daily, humble acts of her ordinary life offered a glimpse to those around her of the vast and extraordinary nature of God.

**In her long and rich life**, Mattie bore witness to one of the central mysteries of the Christian faith: the God we worship—the Creator of the universe who exceeds all our feeble efforts to describe in words or concepts—was made visible in a local and particular form. Indeed, in the person of Jesus, who spent most of his life in a tiny country at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea, serving within a 20- or 30-mile radius of his hometown, we have seen the character of God.

Mattie was not perfect. But because she loved Jesus—because the life and teachings of Jesus were so much at the center of her life—the small, daily, humble acts of her ordinary life offered a glimpse to those around her of the vast and extraordinary nature of God.

I have often asked myself and others what it means to be part of a global church. Surely it includes face-to-face visits with people like Regina Mondez and C.S. Joel. I still hope to visit the Philippines and India sometime. But at a deeper level, it probably has less to do with intercontinental travel and more to do with a way of being in the world wherever we are. Mattie was one face of the global church—firmly rooted in the particularity of time, place and culture yet eager to see the presence of God in everyone she met.

Where have you seen the face of the global church? TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

# What some linguists are up to

Linguists, for those who may be interested, are people who study language. This takes many forms. We may be familiar with Bible translators, but linguists use their expertise to study many different means of communication.

One new field of study may surprise you. Many linguists are now studying tweets—not the tweets of birds but those on Twitter. And Twitter, you may not realize, is a popular form of communication in the social media world. In fact, there are about 500 million messages, each 140 characters or fewer, sent each day on Twitter.

In an article in the Sept. 9 issue of *Time*, Katy Steinmetz considers some of the research happening around these millions of tweets.

In the past, linguists had to interview people in a lab or go to where they live to gain insights into language use. Now, “Twitter is providing the most enormous stream of data [linguists] have ever had at their disposal,” writes Steinmetz.

What can linguists possibly derive from all these tweets? You’d be surprised. “Hidden in tweets are insights about how we portray our identity in a few short sentences,” writes Steinmetz. Among other things, we can learn about how slang spreads.

Here are some of the interesting things linguists are learning:

- women are more likely to use first-person terms (like *I* and *my*) and exclamation points, especially repeated ones;
- men typically share more links and use more technology-related words;
- a female who follows and tweets to a largely male audience is more likely to use features, like numbers, associated with boys, and vice versa for men;
- older tweeters tend to use emoticons with noses—:-) instead of :)—an action tied to their preference for conventional language;
- youthful, “no-nose” tweeters tend to use more swear words;
- young tweeters are more apt to type all-capital words and to use expressive lengthening, like writing “niiiiiice” instead of “nice”;
- the older crowd is more apt to tweet well-wishing phrases like *good morning* and *take care*, to send longer tweets and to use more prepositions.

Tweets may also reveal information about geography, income and race. For example, writes Steinmetz, “the term *suttin* (a variant of *something*) has been associated with Boston-area tweets, while the acronym *ikr* (an expression meaning ‘I know, right?’) is popular in the Detroit area.” Tweets using *awesome* more likely come from wealthy neighborhoods, and “emoticons often appear in tweets sent from areas with a large Hispanic population.”

So what? you ask. As with much science, observation and study precede applications. But already, advertisers and campaign managers are interested in this research.

Some linguists are using Twitter to construct “subway maps around the United States showing where words tend to move.” Others are investigating how rumors and urban legends change as they’re passed from person to person.

There are limitations. Although there are more than 200 million Twitter users, most tend to be young and urban. And people can lie about themselves.

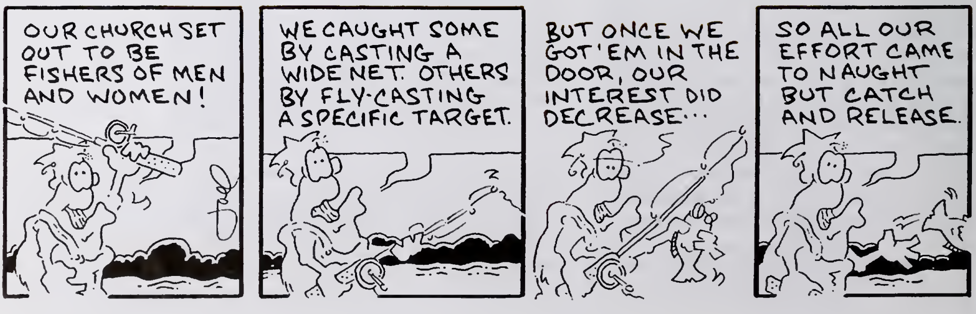
As with other fields of linguistic study, these researchers encounter new forms of language. “People write on Twitter in ways they never have before,” writes Steinmetz. For example, *Ima* serves as a subject, verb and preposition to convey “I am going to.”

The whole social media world may seem like a foreign country to many. But as Twitter grows, study of it will become ever more useful.

Others, like me, who got my B.A. in linguistics many years ago, find such study soooooo cool.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius’ Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


OUR CHURCH SET OUT TO BE FISHERS OF MEN AND WOMEN!
WE CAUGHT SOME BY CASTING A WIDE NET. OTHERS BY FLY-CASTING A SPECIFIC TARGET.
BUT ONCE WE GOT 'EM IN THE DOOR, OUR INTEREST DID DECREASE...
SO ALL OUR EFFORT CAME TO NAUGHT BUT CATCH AND RELEASE.

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “Any idiot can find God alone in the sunset. It takes a certain maturity to find God in the person sitting next to you who not only voted for the wrong political party but has a baby who is crying while you’re trying to listen to the sermon.”

—Author Lillian Daniel

## YouVersion app changing reading of the Bible

For millions of readers around the world, a wildly successful free Bible app, YouVersion, is changing how, where and when they read the Bible.

Built by LifeChurch.tv, one of the nation’s largest and most technologically advanced evangelical churches, YouVersion is part of what the church calls its “digital missions.” They include a platform for online church services and prepackaged worship videos that the church distributes free. A digital tithing system and an interactive children’s Bible are in the works.

It’s all part of the church’s aspiration to be a kind of I.T. department for churches everywhere. YouVersion, with over 600 Bible translations in more than 400 languages, is by far the church’s biggest success. The app is nondenominational, including versions embraced by Catholics, Russian Orthodox and Messianic Jews. This month, the app reached 100 million downloads, placing it in the company of technology start-ups like Instagram and Dropbox.

The church was founded in 1996 by a team consisting mostly of former business executives. It is affiliated with the Evangelical Covenant Church, a wider association of 850 congregations, which gives its members wide latitude in their operations. It has 50,000 weekly attendees in 16 locations.—*New York Times*

**$3 billion**

is the increase in annual income in Detroit alone, according to geographer Harrison Campbell, that could be achieved by bringing the region’s segregation levels, currently among the worst in the country, in line with the national average.

—*The Atlantic*

## Do highly educated people have lousy financial discipline?

A study by Ohio State University has found that the more educated you are, the more likely you are to take on irresponsible levels of debt. And they aren’t talking about student loans but about buying widescreen TVs on your ninth credit card because that 0 percent teaser rate was just irresistible.—*Pacific Standard*

**443,000**

Americans die each year as a result of smoking cigarettes, according to the Center for Disease Control. That’s more than die from HIV, drugs and alcohol, car accidents, suicides and murders combined.

—*Pacific Standard*

## Worker quits over 666 on tax form

Walter Slonopas said he quit his job last week in order to save his soul. Slonopas, 52, resigned as a maintenance worker at Contech Casting LLC in Clarksville after his W-2 tax form was stamped with the number 666.—*Religion News Service*

## Lutherans, Catholics mark Reformation

Lutherans and Catholics have pledged to celebrate together the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017, with both sides agreeing to set aside centuries of hostility and prejudice. The Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation released a joint document, “From Conflict to Communion,” in Geneva on June 17 that said there’s little purpose in dredging up centuries-old conflicts.—*Religion News Service*

### It’s time to reassess your relationship with your computer when ...

**1. You wake up at 4 o’clock in the morning to go to the bathroom and stop at the computer to check your email on the way back to bed.**

**2. You turn off your computer and get an awful empty feeling, as if you just pulled the plug on a loved one.**

**3. You decide to stay in college for an additional year or two, just for the free Internet access.**

**4. You start using smileys :-) in your snail mail.**

**5. When you hand-write a note and think ... SPELL CHECKER!**

**6. You can't correspond with your mother because she doesn't have a computer.**

**7. When your computer's e-mail box shows "no new messages" and you feel really depressed.**

**8. You don't know the gender of your three closest friends because they have non-descript screen names and you never bothered to ask.**

**9. In real-life conversations, you don't laugh, you just say "LOL, LOL."**

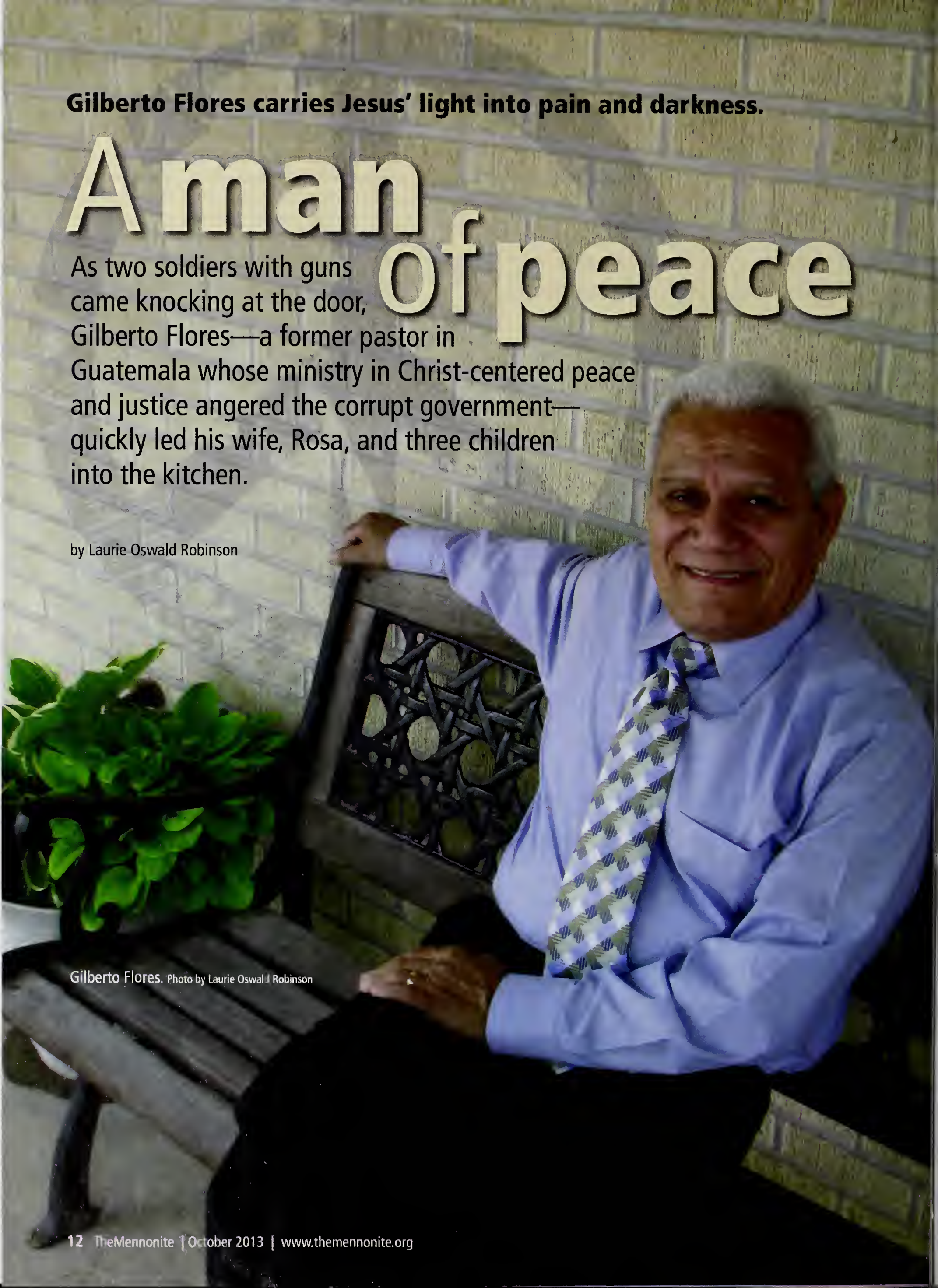
**10. If your computer's Internet connection goes down, you cannot think of other things to do.—*Bits and Bytes***

**Gilberto Flores carries Jesus' light into pain and darkness.**

# A man of peace

As two soldiers with guns came knocking at the door, Gilberto Flores—a former pastor in Guatemala whose ministry in Christ-centered peace and justice angered the corrupt government—quickly led his wife, Rosa, and three children into the kitchen.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson



Gilberto Flores. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

When he came back into the living room, the soldiers butted him with rifles.

His heart and mind raced.

He remembered his boyhood in El Salvador in the 1950s. That's when his parents chose to continue their free-church ministry in the face of persecution in the heavily Catholic region. He remembered when he baptized a man who later became president of Guatemala during the violence-ridden 1980s.

"We have come to kill you," the soldiers said.

"Everything that God will allow you to do, you will do," Flores replied. "But you can't do anything that God doesn't allow. ... If you touch me, that will be the last thing you will do. God will judge you severely, because I am a man of peace."

The soldiers looked at each other and left without saying a word.

This was only one of many times God's mysterious intervention allowed Flores to walk away from death in Central America to share Christ's life in North America. In the early 1990s, Flores left Guatemala to serve in the wider Mennonite church in the United States. It's where in a variety of roles he's helped the church more fully realize its missional calling to join God's work in the world.

In an interview last spring, Flores, associate conference minister for Western District Conference (WDC) and former denominational minister for Mennonite Church USA, said he doesn't want the earlier drama to overshadow the ongoing story of how Christ's light has guided him forward. And yet, he hopes the story inspires others to risk taking Jesus' light into the pain and darkness of their own communities.

"I grew up hearing my parents saying that if we will die, we are ready, but we will not stop doing what we are doing," Flores said. "As a boy, my heart was marked with the belief that we are called to serve God, and if that costs us our life, we can't control that. I grew up with a sense that our life is in God's hands, and only God decides how we live it and how we lose it."

### Persevering family passes on passionate faith

God has shaped Flores, 67, from boyhood on, into a prophet who passionately prods people to take Christ out of the sanctuary and into the street. He was born on Nov. 25, 1945, in the small city of Santa Ana, El Salvador, the sixth of 10 children belonging to Pioquinto and Maria Cristina (Campos) Flores.

As a son of a Protestant pastor, his life at school was difficult, as prejudiced teachers and peers taunted him. But because of the modeling of his family, he absorbed these hardships into a backdrop of persevering faith.

"Every week, when we had choir rehearsal in our home, my father opened up the windows and doors so the strains of the hymns would waft out into the streets," Flores said. "People from the community threw stones at our house. Even though my father had to clean up the mess and repair the roof, the next time he'd open even more of the doors and windows."

I grew up with a sense that our life is in God's hands, and only God decides how we live it and how we lose it.—Gilberto Flores

Flores also remembers being told stories of the Christian martyrs who were persecuted for their faith and how in the 1930s his father was jailed 15 times for refusing to stop his ministry. Once he was beaten and left for dead.

"My parents went to minister in a little village, where a group destroyed the sanctuary and beat up my father," he said. "My father lay there without help for two days. But when some people from a city church brought two caskets to bury my mother and father, they found Mother alive and Father still breathing."

### Like father, like son

This passion for ministry became Flores' own. At 14, he witnessed about Jesus in school. At 16,

▶

Gilberto with his mother (center), aunts and younger brother. Photo provided

Gilberto with (from left) daughter Keren, daughter Fabiola and son Gilberto Alejandro, in 1980 or 1981.
Photo provided

he became a youth pastor and a deacon. At 18, he was licensed as a Christian education minister for 10 churches in El Salvador. At 24, he became a pastor of his first congregation as he finished seminary.

In 1972, at the age of 27, he met and married Rosa Herrera and was ordained pastor of a congregation in southern Guatemala. It was there that the first seeds of his peace and justice focus sprouted when he discovered how cotton farmers were being exploited with low wages.

"That pastorate was a turning point for me," he said. "I was preaching and doing pastoral duties, but one day, I had an 'ah-ha' moment and realized I needed to approach the community from a more peace-and-justice angle. That was my first step into the messiness."

> My place was to be with God among the suffering people and the outcasts.—Gilberto Flores

His transformation as a pastor deepened in 1974, when he took his next pastorate in a rural village in northern Guatemala, where laborers received only 15 cents a day.

"I wanted to find new ways of making the kingdom of God more visible in the community," he said. "By 1974, we were already facing the social turmoil of civil war. I could no longer preach love and peace from the pulpit without applying this to the poverty and violence all around us.

"I felt the pulpit wasn't enough to make my ministry relevant in those circumstances. My place was to be with God among the suffering people and the outcasts."

Flores' missional-infused ministry incited conflict with government leaders. They recoiled from his bold stance in the pulpit and elsewhere, including a national day of prayer and fasting he organized in 1982.

The two kingdoms clashed one Sunday morning in mid-1982. That's when the president of Guatemala, who began his Christian journey under Gilberto's ministry in 1979, came to the Casa Horeb church to worship with a huge entourage of armed guards.

"I announced that he must take his people armed with weapons out of the sanctuary." Flores said. "I said that this is holy, peaceful ground and that because of that he had to do as I requested. He said he wanted to be an obedient servant and so took out all his army helpers.

"After the service, I told him that he needed to stop doing unjust things and engaging in criminal actions, such as killing the poor. He later told me he could longer be my friend after all the disrespect I had shown him that day in church. It was a very sad and painful moment for both of us."

### Transitioning from Latin America to North America

His pain and betrayal ran deep, and Rosa's health deteriorated due to anxiety and stress. But deeper still was their bond to Christ, and so they continued to move forward. For example, Flores became academic dean of the Mennonite seminary SEMILLA in Guatemala City and helped to launch the Association of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala.

The scope of their ministry made another seismic shift in 1990. The couple received a call from Eastern Mennonite Missions to become church planters in Caracas, Venezuela. After one year there, they returned to Guatemala. And in 1992, Rosedale Mennonite Missions (Conservative Mennonite Conference) asked them to help plant a church in San Antonio, where they remained from March 1993 until 1996.

As they prepared to move to Houston to take a new church-planting assignment with Rosedale Mennonite Missions, they received a call from Lois Barrett, then executive secretary of the former Commission on Home Ministries (CHM) for the former General Conference Mennonite Church. (It merged with the Mennonite Church in 2002 to become Mennonite Church USA.) She invited Flores to apply as the director of CHM's Hispanic Ministries.

"At first, I was resistant to the idea," he said. "It seemed God, through the opportunity to pastor a

> I am a dreamer and idealistic, and in a denomination like ours, people can tend to be more like technocrats and engineers than dreamers and risk takers.
> —Gilberto Flores

A younger Gilberto. Photo by provided

local congregation in Houston, was answering my prayers for not having so many responsibilities and the heavy emotional drain."

But in the end, because of the encouragement of Rosa and others, he accepted the role. In June 1996, he and Rosa moved to Newton, Kan. It's where he began his sojourn with what became Mennonite Church USA. And it's where Rosa, also seminary trained and gifted in many ways, helped plant a new Hispanic congregation, Casa Betania.

In the next 13 years, Flores served Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership and Mennonite Mission Network in several roles: as director of Instituto Biblico Anabautista (IBA), as denominational minister for Mennonite Church USA and as director of missional church advancement. In 2009, he left denominational work to nurture WDC's Hispanic leaders and congregations.

### Prophetic gifts till soil of church in transition

His prophetic ministry is a gift for a church seeking to be more multicultural and more missional, says Barrett, director of the Great Plains Extension of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and Jim Schrag, former executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

"He was a good fit for CHM for so many reasons," Barrett says. "He was a pastor, he was theologically trained and he knew immigrant Hispanic culture in North America, and because of that, he knew what was needed. Plus, Latin America was focusing on the missional church long before we were. The scope of Flores' missional understanding was formational and foundational for us.

"And his work with IBA has been a very important tool in developing Hispanic Mennonite congregations, because it educated folks theologically and connected them with the wider Mennonite church."

Schrag says: "Gilberto often said to me, 'Jim, you need to take risks. Being missional is all about taking risks and stepping outside the box. And congregations need to be active in this process for it to be effective.' He was so interested in the persons in the pew and was well aware of the mental and cultural barriers that made it difficult for Mennonites to do these things."

Schrag admires Flores greatly. He says: "He has tackled his challenges with the English language and culture and has become proficient and profound within them. He has lived in a bilingual world and yet has not played Anglos and Latinos against one another. And he has remained faithful to a church and its people even when he perceived they were moving too slowly."

### Daring the church to step over the threshold

Flores believes his challenges to the church were disorienting. He has prodded an oft-cautious denomination to embrace the liminal—the initial

Gilberto Flores and Clarence Rempel, conference minister of Western District Conference. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Gilberto with (from left) daughter Fabiola, granddaughter Camila and Rosa, his wife. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

stage of a process that can be symbolized by stepping across the open doorway into another room.

"I am a dreamer and idealistic, and in a denomination like ours, people can tend to be more like technocrats and engineers than dreamers and risk takers," he said. "It can be complicated to push through new agendas. Sometimes you engineer transition for so long that the initial passion dwindles. Sometimes in the kingdom of God, you've got to stop fitting the puzzle together and move with the Spirit."

> At the hardest times in our lives, when people were rejecting us, Rosa and I kissed each other goodnight and feared that may be our last kiss.
> —Gilberto Flores

His overarching passion is tending the growth of missional theology and practices. And yet, tending multicultural issues are inherent in that focus, he said. His WDC work with Hispanic leaders and congregations gives him ample opportunity.

Even with all the hard work Mennonite Church USA has done in being a more multicultural denomination, the church still face challenges in opening doors to other cultures and dealing with tough issues such as immigration, he said. But he believes the church has made headway, especially its discussions regarding the anti-immigration laws in Arizona as they pertained to our 2013 churchwide assembly in Phoenix, he said.

"My remaining task is to finish creating a mission-oriented and multicultural conference and to see that we are putting WDC into the world and not outside it," he said. "This is my hope before retirement."

### Slowing down, savoring God and family

The Flores' ministry has led the couple, often at breakneck speed, down many dangerous and bumpy roads. So the couple is looking forward to retirement, although they are not sure how it will unfold, they said. They dream of going "home" to Guatemala. They talk of enjoying their four children—Keren, Gilberto Jr., Fabiola and Pablo—and their seven grandchildren. They relish resting in their love of God and family and to be grateful for four decades of marriage. After seasons of going to bed not knowing if they would wake up alive the next day, they hope to enjoy more togetherness and joy.

In his personal time with God, Flores always says thank you to God for God's sense of humor in his life and the life of his family, he said. He often senses God saying that it doesn't matter what happens in life, that there is always grace and a laugh at the end of the road.

"At the hardest times in our lives, when people were rejecting us, Rosa and I kissed each other goodnight and feared that may be our last kiss," he said. "During this time, one day at 5 a.m., one of the poorest men in our congregation brought some bread and chocolate and said, 'I have stopped by because I love you and want to spend a little time with you.'

"That moment was God's sense of humor, consoling us with his presence through fellowship with this poor taxi driver. In ourselves, we could not have done and endured the things we did, but through God's grace, as reflected in this simple moment, we learned not to take ourselves too seriously but to say 'thank you' for saving our lives."

*Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of* Forever Family.

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Joy Sutter** has held a variety church leadership positions, including elder, church board member, conference worker, member of a Mennonite school board, and she is just beginning on the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board. Professionally, she has been in various leadership positions across the continuum of health care. Most of her leadership experience has been in an academic medical center, and she is serving as the associate administrator of the Cancer Service Line in the Abramson Cancer Center at the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

As a young adult, I was tapped by my pastor for church leadership.
—Joy Sutter

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**
No, I did not have a specific female leader as a mentor for most of my leadership journey. I have strategically sought out female colleagues to learn from their successes and failures in both my church and professional worlds. Professionally, I have a female leader/ boss/mentor who is a wonderful role model by allowing me to lead by focusing on my strengths.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**
Yes, I am in contact with several women who may be potential church leaders. I encourage them to step up or speak up, which sometimes means going outside their comfort zones. I intentionally tap for leadership positions women who have great potential to serve the church.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**
One major difference from my experience is that today there are more leadership opportunities for women in the church and more women to act as mentors. As a young adult, I was tapped by my pastor for church leadership, and today's church environment enables those in other leadership positions to encourage women to accept the leadership call.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**
Learning how to embrace a nonanxious leadership presence and not react to highly charged situations.

**When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?**
When I see others overcome obstacles and grow and develop as leaders, it makes me a better leader. I am also encouraged when I observe individuals working harmoniously in teams to find solutions to problems that contribute to organizational success.

Mennonite
Church
USA

# Archives

## Collecting, sharing, and preserving stories of Mennonite Christian discipleship

Partly
DAVE
ELKHART COFFEE HOUSE IN

Peter Stucky and other staff, volunteers and patrons of Partly Dave hold a procession ceremony as they move to their new coffee house location at 201 South Main Street in Elkhart, 1973. Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

The Archives, a ministry of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board, are located in North Newton, Kan., in the Bethel College library, and in Goshen, Ind., in Newcomer Center at Goshen College.

Each year, the Archives hosts several hundred researchers in person and answers about 1,000 reference questions for in-person and remote researchers. In the past year, the Archives' approximately 5,400 photographs available online have received more than 750,000 views. Among the researchers are students, historians, theologians, pastors, documentary researchers, genealogists, former mission workers and people whose lives have been touched by Mennonites.

The following stories of two grassroots initiatives from the mid-20th century—the Partly Dave Coffee House in Elkhart, Ind., and the Guest House and Cafeteria in Newton, Kan.—give us a glimpse of the rich history contained in our Mennonite archives.

To learn more, visit: www.mennoniteusa.org/executive-board/archives.

Joe Landis, Robert Charles and Peter Stucky in front of the third Partly Dave location at 201 South Main Street in Elkhart, Ind. Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

PARTLY DAVE
COFFEE HOUSE

Partly Dave staff work on the sign of the second Partly Dave storefront on 114 South Main Street in 1972.

Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

## Elkhart's Partly Dave Coffee House ministry, 1966-1975

*Only the righteous are served at the [traditional church] supper, but all manner of sinners find their way to the coffee house. This situation is distressing to those who have forgotten that they, too, are sinners, essentially no different from the coffee house customers. The theoretical goal of all coffee house programming is to raise questions, rather than give answers.*—John D. Perry Jr., *The Coffee House Ministry* (John Knox Press, 1966)

# For **love,** for **friends,** for **questions**

by Ted Maust

In the mid-1960s, when Americans of all backgrounds were publicly challenging widely held beliefs about racial segregation, consumer society, the Vietnam War and women's rights, changes were also taking place within the two largest Mennonite denominations: the (old) Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference (GC) Mennonite Church. Many Mennonite youth were beginning to question church teachings about forms of service and personal expression.

Also during this decade, a Christian coffee house in Washington, D.C., named The Potter's House was sparking a wave of imitators across the nation. In 1965, the National Council of Churches hired John D. Perry Jr. to survey the phenomenon, and his report—*The Coffee House Ministry*—sparked even greater interest in the coffee house as mission. Eighty coffee houses had opened in the previous five years, and there would be 100 more by the end of the year. This was a time when many Christians felt that the non-church setting of a coffee house provided an informal, neutral ground in which to bridge the cultural chasms that existed in America.

In the winter of 1966, Professor Leland Harder led a Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS) class in Elkhart, Ind., using Perry's study as a text. Harder's students wanted to give the coffee house ministry model a try. They took part in discussions with representatives from several other churches and organizations in the community to assess the viability of such a venture. By May, this planning group filed to form an independent nonprofit organization—Elkhart Coffee House, Inc.—and in September they opened the Partly Dave Coffee House at 128 West Franklin Street in Elkhart.

In 1968 are (seated, left to right) Howard Palmatier, Ruth Burkholder, unknown woman, Dennis Stahly, Nathan Habegger and (standing, left to right) Dennis Hiebert, Lauren Friesen, unknown man, Judge Joe Grolimund. Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

Dialogue was the main goal of the early Partly Dave.

### A setting for dialogue

An Oct. 3, 1966, article in the *Elkhart Truth* reported, “Folk singers and actors barely found room to perform at the first opening weekend of Partly Dave Coffee House as the more than 300 teenagers and young adults crowded into the small café.”

The coffee house took its name from a 1964 short story by John Lennon: “Partly Dave” from *In His Own Write*.

“One way to think about it is that it’s Partly Dave, and partly you,” said Faye (last name not given), a Partly Dave staff attendant (*Elkhart Truth* article, May 20, 1967).

The adverb “partly” came to represent the multifaceted goals for the enterprise. The introductory brochure described Partly Dave as, “Partly a place … where friends meet … where questions are asked ... where opinions are heard … where God’s love is witnessed … where troubles are unloaded” and “where help is needed.”

“The primary purpose of the Coffee House,” began Partly Dave’s statement of purpose, “is to provide a relaxed, noncommercial setting for interpersonal dialogue about vital current and ultimate issues of life.”

Dialogue was the main goal of the early Partly Dave, facilitated by volunteer mediators who both listened and spoke from their own beliefs. Volunteers met for an hour before the evening’s program to prepare themselves to engage with anyone and everyone who showed up. Food and beverages were for sale, and there was usually a presentation, often music. Performances, however, were always curtailed to allow for discussions at 10-person tables.

In 1971, students in Leland Harder’s Methods of Social Research course at Goshen College conducted a study of Partly Dave based on responses to a questionnaire to identify the demographics of the coffee house’s patrons and their attendance patterns. When asked their main reason for attending Partly Dave, 31.6 percent of patrons answered “to rap with friends,” and only 5.2 percent cited scheduled entertainment. On this evidence, the students concluded that Partly Dave was succeeding in its effort to create a space for dialogue.

### Congregations offer marginal support

The coffee house, operating on a shoestring budget, got most of its funding from the sales of

Thelma Farrell and Peter Stucky at Partly Dave's boutique in 1973. Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

coffee and snacks. Although congregations were invited to become institutional partners of Partly Dave for an annual contribution of $300, they were slow to back the ministry. After the initial round of recruitment, only four congregations signed on in any year before 1973: First Presbyterian, Hively Avenue Mennonite (a GC congregation), Fellowship of Hope (MC) and Southside Fellowship (MC-GC). Those who did so later offered perhaps too little, too late.

"One of the most disillusioning facts about this ministry," wrote Howard Palmatier, president of the board, in 1968, "has been the inability of the majority of the churches to see this as mission."

John Kampen, manager of Partly Dave from 1968 to 1970, thought he knew why churches were reluctant to participate fully. After only one area congregation responded to a proposal for collaboration, he wrote, "Possibly the churches are not confident enough of themselves to enter into dialogue with those outside their walls, or they are so busy with internal programs that they do not have time to dialogue with the outside world."

Partly Dave began to diversify to better engage a more varied clientele and to raise its own funds. A gift boutique, which began as a shelf inside Partly Dave, sold crafts made by patrons or brought from other countries by donors and friends of Partly Dave. Other initiatives over the years included an annual art fair, a poster shop for youth under age 16 (who were not allowed into the coffee house), the Peace Frog [Used-LP] Record Co-op and a food co-op.

Manager Peter Stucky wrote in his April 20, 1971, Annual Report that "each quarter required some 30-40 volunteers for the coffeehouse, poster shop [and] boutique."

### Evolving needs bring changes

Partly Dave was forced to vacate rental properties twice—in August 1969 to 114 South Main Street and in January 1973 to 201 South Main Street. Both relocations brought opportunities for new uses of space and different surroundings and a re-evaluation of the coffee house's purpose.

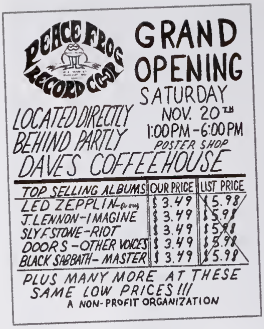
For example, in 1970, Partly Dave's board of directors added a live-in manager to provide administrative streamlining and to embrace a more around-the-clock presence. Partly Dave became a place where people in need could go, and the managers' work with drug users, runaways and transients would grow to become a bigger facet of the ministry's mission. With more volunteer and staff time devoted to rehabilitating individuals to function in mainstream society, some of the countercultural nature of Partly Dave was set aside.

"Is Partly Dave's function to simply prepare persons to fit into American society more smoothly?" asked manager Peter Stucky. "The answer is no."

Instead, Stucky felt "a need for some kind of ongoing contact between the values" of the volunteers and the patrons. "But [Partly Dave] has no congregation with which patrons can identify and continue their search and growth as persons," he

Partly Dave's work with marginalized people, particularly drug users, may have affected the coffee house's standing in the community.

Participants in Partly Dave's 1973 move to the 201 S. Main Street location. Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary


PEACE FROG RECORD CO-OP

GRAND OPENING
SATURDAY
NOV. 20TH
1:00PM-6:00PM

LOCATED DIRECTLY BEHIND PARTLY ~~POSTER SHOP~~ DAVE'S COFFEEHOUSE

| TOP SELLING ALBUMS | OUR PRICE | LIST PRICE |
|---|---|---|
| LED ZEPPLIN | $ 3.49 | ~~$5.98~~ |
| J. LENNON-IMAGINE | $ 3.49 | ~~$5.98~~ |
| SLY F STONE-RIOT | $ 3.49 | ~~$5.98~~ |
| DOORS-OTHER VOICES | $ 3.49 | ~~$5.98~~ |
| BLACK SABBATH-MASTER | $ 3.49 | ~~$5.98~~ |

PLUS MANY MORE AT THESE SAME LOW PRICES!!!
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

A poster from Partly Dave's Peace Frog Record Co-op.

Photo courtesy of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

observed. While a few congregations were willing to donate money to Partly Dave's cause, none was willing to integrate Partly Dave patrons into their congregation.

Partly Dave's work with marginalized people, particularly drug users, may have affected the coffee house's standing in the community.

"There are people in Elkhart who do not understand our program and are frightened by what they do know," said Kampen. Over the years, however, Partly Dave's volunteers and resident staff nurtured valuable connections with other area agencies, such as a crisis hotline and Oaklawn, a Mennonite-administered mental health facility in Goshen, Ind. (When the board looked at closing Partly Dave in 1975, the hotline sent a petition of support for its continuance.)

"Looking at the records of Partly Dave, it seems that the organization was constantly re-examining itself to better determine how [it] could carry out [its] mission and meet the needs of a rapidly changing community," said Matthew Schuld, Elkhart County Historical Museum Manager, in introducing the museum's current exhibit on Partly Dave.

### 'A self-feeding cycle'

In January 1973, with a wave of donations and a $16,000 loan from Church Extension Services, Inc., of the General Conference Mennonite Church, a permanent location for Partly Dave was purchased at 201 South Main Street.

Financial concerns stemming from the move loomed over Partly Dave, however, and the cultural context surrounding its ministry was changing drastically.

"[There has been] a shift of attitudes away from a self-conscious and focused alienation toward society and its values and toward a listless, self-centered alienation [within the youth culture]," wrote Manager Bob Charles in his 1973–74 report.

Decreased demand for Partly Dave led to financial collapse. Whereas weekend programs in 1970 had averaged 125 patrons, in 1974 the average was 40. Door fees totaled more than $4,000 in 1972 but dropped to $1,822 in 1973 and to $1,434 a year later.

Charles cited the questionnaire of four years earlier when reflecting on the decrease in attendance. "If persons come to be among people and rap with friends," he wrote, "then the increasing absence of people and friends means a lack of motivation for coming. The cycle would seem to be a self-feeding one."

On July 8, 1975, the board voted to shut down the ministry by a vote of six to one. Partly Dave's mission had come to an end.

Though Partly Dave existed far longer than most coffee house ministries, many of which lasted mere months, it became a casualty of the very kinds of social upheaval that had brought it into being. It was put succinctly on the pro-con list to decide whether to shut down: "We have become an institution, and we never intended to last forever."

Echoing how they had marked the coffee house's 1973 move, the people of Partly Dave ended their ministry with a liturgy:

"The Partly Dave Coffee House opened its doors in September 1966 at 128 West Franklin,

And that was good.

There was not and never had been a place like Partly Dave in Elkhart. It was unique and exciting,

And that was good.

It was a people more than a building,

And that was good.

Partly Dave didn't always know what it was doing but it had a direction it was heading,

And that was good.

And now Partly Dave is closing the doors of its last building; the city of Elkhart has been touched; the lives of hundreds of people have been touched,

And that is good.

Partly Dave will now live on in our lives.

We will continue to grow and experience; we will care and we will share; WE WILL LOVE!"

**The Partly Dave exhibit** is on display at the Elkhart County Historical Museum at 304 W. Vistula (SR 120) in Bristol, Ind., through September 2014. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. There is no charge for admission; donations are accepted. See www.elkhartcounty-history.org. The exhibit is a result of collaboration among the Elkhart County Historical Museum, the Mennonite Church USA Archives, the Elkhart County Parks Department, the Elkhart County Historical Society and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

*Ted Maust is serving with Mennonite Voluntary Service at the Wisconsin State Historical Society Press in Madison. The information supplied for this article comes from Partly Dave Coffeehouse Records, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and from an Elkhart County Historical Museum exhibit with the same name as the title of this article.*

Mennonite Church USA

## Archives

Bethel College professor J. Winfield Fretz put into practice the ethics he taught by opening a restaurant in 1953.

# Food service and racial integration

by Melanie Zuercher

In the spring of 2012, workers renovating a building in the 600 block of downtown Newton, Kan., pulled off an awning to reveal a visual blast from the past. A sign painted above the doors of Peace Connections, a community peace center, and a florist business read, "Guest House" and "Self Service," along with most of the letters of "Cafeteria."

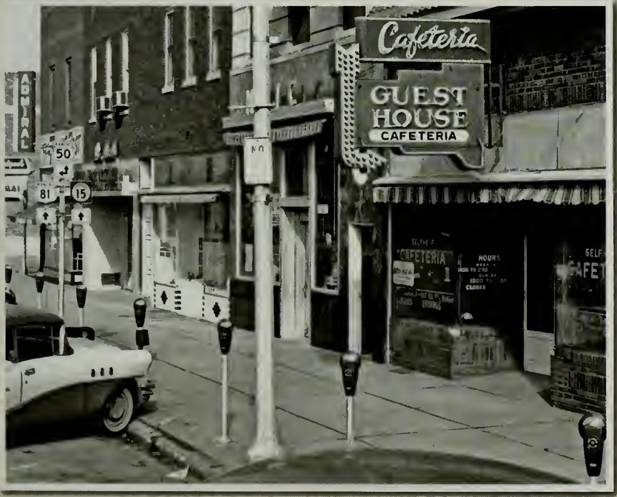
The Guest House and Cafeteria, a Newton social hub in the 1950s, closed in 1972. Its modest appearance belied its historic importance, ranging from its then-innovative way of doing food service to its role in pioneering racial integration.

Around 1953, J. Winfield Fretz, a professor of sociology at Bethel College in North Newton, became a partner in a Newton restaurant located a few doors down from 612 North Main. His reasons were to supplement his income so that, as he said, he could "afford to continue teaching," and to see whether the business ethics he taught in the classroom could be applied to real life.

Later, Fretz had the opportunity to be sole owner of the business. He took the chance, at the same time converting it to something new—what we would today most likely call a buffet or smorgasbord.

**When it opened as the Guest House and Cafeteria**, the restaurant was the first in Newton—and one of only three in the state—to operate as self-service. (There was one in Wichita that had sown the idea for the Guest House.) It was likely also among the first to include a salad bar, offering a dozen or more choices of cold salads, pickles and relishes.

When the sign resurfaced in 2012, community people who remembered



Guest House storefront, ca. 1958. Photo by Simon W. Schmidt (Mennonite Church USA Archives)

Try Our
DUTCH MEAT PIES
FROZEN—TO CARRY OUT
A Quick Hot Meal for Two
INKS
AND
XTRA

J. Winfield Fretz in his restaurant ca. 1958.

Photo by Simon W. Schmidt (Mennonite Church USA Archives)

Make your own Change

James Rutschman and J. Winfield Fretz at the Guest House Cafeteria, ca. 1958.

Photo by Simon W. Schmidt (Mennonite Church USA Archives)

patronizing the Guest House frequently recalled the fried chicken and cinnamon rolls, as well as specific foods served on specific days, such as roast turkey on Thursday and seafood on Friday. Overall, the menu was distinguished by its homestyle food. When Peace Connections director Myrna Krehbiel gathered a group in late July to share memories of the Guest House, one person compared its food offerings to "a really good church potluck."

Another unusual aspect that Fretz introduced was the self-service honor system coffee break. Between 9 and 11 a.m. and 2 and 5 p.m., employees set out the coffee urn, creamer, pastries and pie, along with about $10 in change in a cup. Customers served themselves, on their honor to pay and make their own change.

"We cannot check to the penny whether we are long or short," Fretz wrote in *Christian Living* in May 1958, "but ... we have been satisfied repeatedly that there is very little discrepancy in the daily cash receipts from the coffee breaks."

Fretz called integrating the Guest House the source of 'perhaps the greatest spiritual satisfaction' gained from his business venture.

**Source:** "A College Professor on Main Street—Will the ideals taught in the classroom work in business life?" by J. Winfield Fretz, *Christian Living*, May 1958 (Vol. 5 No. 5), pp. 6–9.

James D. Rutschman was a part of the Guest House from its beginning. He first applied for the position of cook, but Fretz quickly made him the manager and offered him a partnership in 1955. This coincided with the decision to move the Guest House from its original location.

In 1957, the partners decided to integrate the restaurant, several years ahead of the national curve of desegregation in eating establishments.

At first, the customer base stayed primarily white. Then African-American railroad porters—Newton is a historic railroad town with a passenger station that still serves Amtrak—found out there was a place just a few blocks from the station where they could sit down for a meal.

Roger Rutschman, James' son, had his first job working in the Guest House, waiting tables.

"Dad would tell a story of seeing several porters walk by, several times," Rutschman says. "He asked, 'Can I help you fellas?' "

The porters told James they had heard the Guest House was open to everyone, but they were hesitant to enter because they saw no people of color inside. James told them to "come right in and get a bite to eat."

"From that point on, we had a good following of railroad workers," Roger Rutschman says.

His father reaped an unexpected benefit from this action, he adds. When James traveled to Chicago for the first time—to attend a trade show—he got off the train with no idea how to find either the show venue or his hotel.

As he was looking around the station, trying to figure things out, a railroad porter approached him. The man recognized him from the Guest House.

"That porter took Dad home, fed Dad and helped Dad find his hotel and trade show," Roger says. "It was a really nice gesture. The porter was just appreciative to have a place to eat [in Newton]."

Fretz called integrating the Guest House the source of "perhaps the greatest spiritual satisfaction" gained from his business venture.

"As far as I know, ours is the only place in our town of 15,000 people where all races are treated exactly alike and have identical privileges," Fretz wrote in *Christian Living*. "Businessmen have for years justified their own discrimination on the ground that customers wouldn't stand for racial equality. Our own experience has proven this a pure myth.

"During the five years of operation, not over a half-dozen customers have even hinted at unhappiness because we served Negroes, while literally hundreds have expressed congratulations for our willingness to do so.

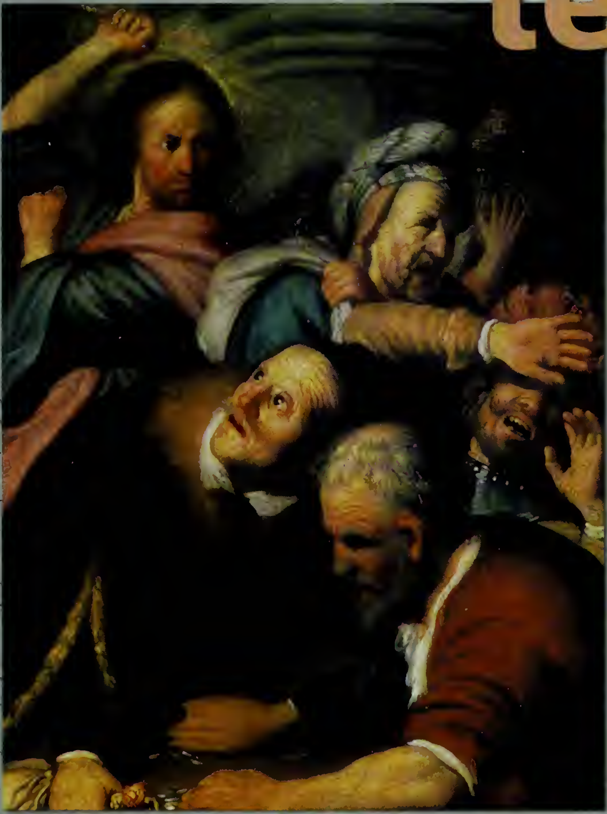
"How many customers we have lost due to the fact that Negroes, Mexicans, Indians and Orientals are served indiscriminately, I do not know; but whatever the losses, they cannot outweigh the satisfaction that has come from feeling one is doing right in the sight of God and his own fellow men."

*Melanie Zuercher is the writer and editor for institutional communications at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.*

Our peacemaking needs to include other creatures.

# Jesus in the temple

by Andy Alexis-Baker



Christ Driving the Money changers from the Temple by Rembrandt, 1626 | www.wikipaintings.org

In his painting "Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple" (1626), Rembrandt depicted an angry, scowling Jesus with a raised whip. The whip winds into the background, becoming fuzzy from rapid movement as Jesus prepares to strike. In the foreground, an old woman scampers out of his way while some "money changers" try to protect their faces from Jesus' lash. "Zeal" consumed Jesus, and zeal translates into uncontrolled violence. Rembrandt's painting illustrates the dominant way this incident from Jesus' life has been used in Christian history. From just war to the Crusades to executing heretics, the story of Jesus' action in the temple has fueled violence and killing. Fear, intimidation and the threat of bodily harm are acceptable for Christians so long as it serves a righteous cause. ▶

Yet portrayals of Jesus raging through the temple haven't always held sway. For example, in the late fourth century, bishops debated about the passage during a synod at Constantinople. A bishop named Rabbula had to answer for hitting priests. In his own defense, Rabbula said that Jesus had hit people in the temple. In response, Theodore of Mopsuestia denied that Jesus hit any person according to the text in John 2, stating, "Our Lord did not do that; he only spoke words to the people, saying, 'Take that from here,' and overturned the tables. But he drove out the bulls and sheep with the blows of his whip" (*Cause de la fondation des ecoles* in *Patrologia Orientalis 4*, 1908, my translation from the French). For Theodore, and many other early Christians, Jesus clearly taught peace, and the temple incident did not undercut his nonviolence.

If Jesus' action was a nonviolent protest against the sacrificial system and economic abuses, those to whom he first gives respite are nonhuman animals.

**Modern pacifist readings of John 2** follow Theodore's general outline: Jesus uses his weapon on the sheep and cattle not on the human beings. For instance, this is how John Howard Yoder argued in his famous book *The Politics of Jesus*. Moreover, Yoder and other modern scholars add, Jesus did not engage in a fit of temple road rage but a nonviolent protest. Therefore, hitting other people at that kind of demonstration was off limits. Indeed the Greek syntax undeniably states that Jesus used the whip to drive out both the sheep and the oxen and rules out that he used his whip on any human. Modern translations like the New Revised Standard Version correctly translate the passage: "Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle" (John 2:15). However, this clarification is cold comfort to the nonhuman animals in this scene, especially if we imagine Jesus' whip to have been a weapon designed to harm others, as Rembrandt's painting suggests.

Instead of a tool fashioned to inflict suffering, the narrative suggests that Jesus made a makeshift instrument for moving the animals. The materials he had available would have been the reeds on which the animals lay and the cords with which they were tied. This implies that his whip was more like a broom than a slaughterhouse cattle prod. Additionally, many scholars have noted that Jesus' action was one of liberation, not violence, as he literally spares the sheep and oxen, at least temporarily, from their gruesome fate. Jesuit peacemaker John Dear states that "with such spectacular nonviolence, one cannot imagine Jesus even striking the poor animals. Indeed, he was liberating them from their impending execution" ("Didn't Jesus Overturn Tables and Chase People Out of the Temple?" in *A Faith Not Worth Fighting For: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Nonviolence*, edited by Tripp York and Justin Barringer, Cascade Books, 2012).

Ultimately, Jesus' own death later in the story ends animal sacrifice. If there is one creature Jesus stands for in the Gospel narratives it is the nonhuman animals that would have been put to death during ritual sacrifice. So if Jesus' action was a nonviolent protest against the sacrificial system and economic abuses, those to whom he first gives respite are nonhuman animals.

**The strongest challenge to the idea** that Jesus threw an unrestrained tantrum, however, is how he treats the doves. The Gospel of John says that after fashioning his broom to get the animals moving out the door, Jesus began turning over tables and pouring out the vendor's money purses. But suddenly Jesus stopped and told the dove-sellers to take their caged birds out of the temple. A person who was blind with rage and who did not much care for nonhuman creatures would have knocked the caged birds over like the tables and money jars. If the birds didn't matter any more than metal coins or wooden tables, then Jesus

**A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for Animals**, edited by Tripp York and Andy Alexis-Baker (Cascade, 2012, $23), includes 14 essays addressing biblical and theological questions Christians may have about care for animals, such as about animal sacrifice, Jesus eating meat, the idea of humanity's dominion over animals and vegetarianism as a Christian spiritual practice. The book abounds with interesting insights. Carol J. Adams writes that "the first image of God in the Bible is of a brooding female bird." Malinda Elizabeth Berry points out that in his resurrection Jesus "overcomes the personal, structural and predatory violence of his death." And John Berkman writes that "factory farming contributes more to global warming than all our motor vehicles combined." The writers span denominational lines, though several are Mennonite. And, as Alexis-Baker points out in his introduction, "more than half of the essays are written by women, three of whom are women of color."—*Gordon Houser* would have overturned their cages, sending them fluttering in panic while banging against a falling cage. Here Jesus takes deliberate care not to overturn the bird cages. He does not put them through further distress but protects them. He pauses in the middle of his nonviolent demonstration to act graciously toward these little creatures.

What lessons can we modern readers draw from this temple story if we pay attention to the way Jesus treated the nonhuman animals? First, Christian pacifists need to expand our view of what nonviolence means. The most influential pacifist commentators on the passage, such as Yoder, have drawn numerous lessons against war, policing and other forms of human-on-human violence. That we don't need to stop injustice with a greater force of arms seems to be the general pacifist consensus based on the passage. But Jesus' action had implications for the other creatures in the story as well.

War, for instance, kills humans and other animals alike. War is an ecological disaster, a threat to all life, including humans. The U.S. military kills and tortures hundreds of thousands of primates, dogs, cats, goats, pigs and other animals each year in weapons tests. Armies across the globe often hunker down in dense forests and jungles, threatening endangered species like the mountain gorillas in the Congo.

The merchants in this story bred and raised the nonhuman creatures for their monetary value. The animals were mere commodities. They were meat. They were sacrificial victims. They were not God's good creatures with whom we have a covenantal relationship and obligation to serve and help flourish. What would happen if we started naming other creatures in ways that does not see them as merchandise but as God's beloved creations? How would our relationship to them change if we saw them as fellow creatures, kinfolk and friends on this journey of life, rather than instruments for our disposal?

**What if our nonviolent actions** took into account other creatures? In the past century, nonviolent direct action has caused empires to crumble, unjust regimes to change course and given new meaning to Christian discipleship. Across the denominational divides, peacemaking has taken hold as a respectable and essential activity for Christians. Yet rarely have we noticed that some of the most influential nonviolent activists have held a different relationship to nonhuman animals from the dominant culture. Catholic farm worker activist Cesar Chavez, for example, expanded his nonviolence to include all animals and refused to eat them. Chavez's descendants, Christine Chavez and Julie Chavez Rodriguez, continue their grandfather's work organizing migrant workers and also see animal activism as an essential part of nonviolence. Likewise, Martin Luther King Jr.'s son, Dexter Scott King, who is president of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, said that becoming vegan is the logical extension of his father's nonviolent view. Coretta Scott King agreed, becoming vegan for the final decade of her life. Father John Dear has also done work on behalf of other animals, not only becoming vegetarian but writing on their behalf as well.

© John Badertscher | 2013 TM photo contest entrant

When Mennonites think of imitating Jesus, we might think about how to pause and consider the creatures that too often go unnoticed.

Jesus deliberately went into the temple to stage a symbolic action of protest against the institutional forces that not only exploited people's religious sensibilities and economic status but killed thousands of creatures every year. He saved their lives and made sure he did not harm them in the process of working for peace and justice. When Mennonites think of imitating Jesus, we might think about how we can pause as well and consider the creatures that too often go unnoticed.

*Andy Alexis-Baker is a Ph.D. candidate at Marquette University in systematic theology and coeditor of* A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for Animals *(Cascade, 2012).*

An Anabaptist seeker finds alternative forms of community.

# Outside the box

by Becca J.R. Lachman

www.sxc.hu

How long can a Mennonite survive without community? As definitions for both "community" and "Mennonite" evolve, I hear this question surfacing more often and experience its echo in my own life.

Growing up, I could knock on the front doors of three Mennonite churches within minutes of each other. I assumed that no matter where I ended up later in life, access to a broad Mennonite community would be available. Even while attending a non-Mennonite college and serving with Mennonite Voluntary Service in a major city, a Mennonite congregation was only ever a city bus ride away. But my adult vocation has me at a vibrant state college town in Ohio's Appalachian foothills, 80 miles from the nearest Mennonite Church USA congregation.

Looking back on almost a decade since I moved to the place I now call home, I'm finally able to recognize that I muddled through all the major stages of grief after feeling like I'd simultaneously abandoned my faith tradition and that it had also, in many ways, abandoned me. I'd convinced myself that in order to live where I did and to become the person I felt called to be (a creative writer, a leader, a feminist, an advocate for the arts), I needed to ignore or even cleanse myself from being Mennonite. But I eventually concluded that stepping outside my ethnic Mennonite culture would allow me to embrace a new life as an Anabaptist-by-choice.

**The distinction between Mennonite and Anabaptist** has become important to my post-college journey toward Jesus and my interactions with others. As someone born into a denomination, I feel that sometimes Mennonite refers to culture more than living out beliefs. When I pine for hymn-sings, my family's 1840s farm or even my Grandma's recipes, I'm really missing interaction with my Swiss-German culture. But when I pine for everyday reconciliation or question my nation's addictions to power through violence and wealth, I'm partly acting out of a deep homesickness for the kingdom of God—according to the Gospels, a vastly different existence from most norms in American society.

I eventually concluded that stepping outside my ethnic Mennonite culture would allow me to embrace a new life as an Anabaptist-by-choice.

If this "upside-down kingdom" is so different, shouldn't today's Christ-inspired lives also reflect a deliberate choice to be unusual? For American Anabaptists today, perhaps recommitting ourselves to living simply, welcoming the oppressed as equals and refusing to support war in any form may be the most important acts of nonviolence we can commit to in our lifetimes. But how do we change and inspire as a faith family from the inside out?

When I help teach a popular undergraduate course called Difficult Dialogues: Women and Religion, I'm asked to share my own faith experience, followed by facilitated small-group discussions. I've found that after I debunk popular myths and exaggerations portrayed in mainstream media about Anabaptists, the 100 or so college students react most visibly to two things: the Anabaptists' history and continued practice of nonviolence and the fact that even though I still have deep concerns about my faith as a woman and artist, years of critical thinking and higher education have brought me back to my denomination, instead of driving me further away. In my lecture, I don't claim that the Anabaptists were or are without fault. And I try to stress that when any person really follows the teachings of Jesus, our bigger world often reacts with anger or dismay.

Yet when I tell these students about the "third way," describing such things as the Sermon on the Mount, Ted and Company Theatreworks, relief sales, fair trade, Christian Peacemaker Teams or the Peace Tax Fund, our small group discussions are abuzz with family stories and tough questions. Usually, a few students ask if they can come with me to church sometime, or others want online sources about alternative service in a region of Ohio where, for more and more students, only the military offers a realistic chance for college or a steady job.

**Such a high-energy reaction** gives me hope in the future of Anabaptism in America. And while I can be Anabaptist salt no matter where I go to church (through grad school and the first few years of marriage, I was an Anabaptist Quaker and an Anabaptist Episcopalian), I also need the mentorships of other Anabaptists.

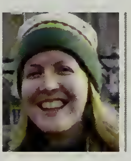
For years, I've mostly found these mentorships outside any traditional church building. In fact, I've discovered some of the most unabashedly Anabaptist communities thriving "at the edges" of our denomination. A hodgepodge of Anabaptist-affiliated books, sermon podcasts, blogs, writing conferences, magazines and artist gatherings feed my faith journey on Sunday mornings and into the week. Spiritually fed, I go out into my workweek and interact mostly with non-Anabaptists.

Though I've now joined the Mennonite Church USA congregation 80 miles from my house and try to attend once a month, virtual and temporary Anabaptist communities continue to lead me like bread crumbs back to a personal relationship with the Jesus of the Gospels, the Holy Spirit left to nudge us, and a fully realized goodness in the world I may never see.

Living and working so far from an in-person faith family isn't simple or easy. I know that nothing can replace face-to-face fellowship and dialogue. But as someone dedicated to promoting and practicing the arts, I've also learned that choosing to live at the edges of society—even a national church family—can be part of healthy spiritual and social growth.

Though I don't attend a traditional church service every Sunday, I feel more Anabaptist today than at any other point in my life.

Though I don't attend a traditional church service every Sunday, I feel more Anabaptist today than at any other point in my life. The older I get, the more people I meet who are also seeking out these alternative forms of Anabaptist community all over the world. How will Mennonite Church USA reach out to these seekers, growing in number? And what can the body of the church learn from those who, either by choice or by location, remain "outside the box" of a traditional church building?



*Becca J.R. Lachman teaches and tutors writing at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, and is a member of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church.* The Apple Speaks *(Cascadia), her first book of poems, is dedicated "to humanitarian workers around the globe, but more for the families who love them."*

**Alternative communities and mentors** that most enrich and challenge Becca's Anabaptist seeking include (in no particular order):

- a subscription to *The Mennonite*
- the Mennonite Arts Weekend
- the Mennonite Church USA Women in Leadership project
- podcasts and printed versions of sermons posted online, particularly from Germantown Mennonite Church in Philadelphia
- the Young Anabaptist Radicals blog: young.anabaptistradicals.org/
- the Mennonite/s Writing conference
- the poetry and journals of William Stafford
- a subscription to *The Sun* (journal)
- OnBeing (podcasts and blogs about faith and ethics) www.onbeing.org/
- the Center for Mennonite Writing online journal
- *The Naked Anabaptist* (book)
- The World Together (blog)
- Christian Peacemaker Teams' newsletters
- Prayers of a Privileged People (daily devotions)
- Facebook pages, such as Marginal Mennonite Society

# A fool for Mennonite education

**Malinda Elizabeth Berry** teaches theology at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., and is the newly appointed chair of the Mennonite Education Agency Board.

I often describe myself as a "product of Mennonite education" because I am an alumna of Bethany Christian Schools in Goshen, Ind., Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. While my educational pedigree translates into power and privilege, as a woman of color, I believe strongly in using my power and privilege for everyone's good, not just my own.

What does this mean in the context of my work with Mennonite Education Agency (MEA)? I have a responsibility to reflect on my educational experiences and take the foundational principles of Anabaptist-Mennonite pedagogy and make them available to everyone, everywhere. This may sound idealistic, and you may call me a fool for Mennonite education. So be it.

Here are three big ideas I am advocating for in my leadership of the MEA board of directors.

**1. There is still a place for a denominationally connected school system**, but not for the reasons many schools were first opened. Whether we like it or not, those of us who are part of families that have been Mennonite and faithfully attended Mennonite schools for generations have to admit that our alma maters were often established to preserve our communities' ethnic identity and heritage. That itself is not a bad thing, but when preservation, however subtle, becomes an end in itself, we have ignored the call to invite others to join our communities and share our interpretation of the Christian faith. At the same time, simply putting aside a tradition of preserving a way of life, faith and education because of the excesses of ethnocentrism is not the answer.

The more we make the education-mission connection, the less ethnocentric and more creative we will become.

We have invested ourselves in becoming missional, but we have some work to do to articulate how our Mennonite school system is also part of Mennonite Church USA's missional identity. The more we make the education-mission connection, the less ethnocentric and more creative we will become as we focus on why and how we teach Jesus' way of peace as central to the gospel's meaning.

**2. When we think about education as part of our denomination's mission**, then we can see that the work of Mennonite education is not limited to a specific set of teachers and faculty on elementary, secondary, college, university or seminary campuses because it takes place wherever a member of Mennonite Church USA is building a learning community. In other words, if the only ones who count as "Mennonite educators" are those who teach (other Mennonites) on Mennonite campuses, then we neglect the resource Mennonite education has in our body's members who bring a commitment to Christian community and nonviolence to the campuses where they fulfill their vocation. I hope that along with our Youth Census, MEA will be able to initiate an Educators Census to identify and connect with all the teachers in Mennonite Church USA because they are also part of our school system.

**3. Building learning communities can be an exercise in nonconformity**, which in turn contributes to the renewal of our denomination and even the Christian church as a whole. This last big idea comes from the well-known cultural critic Bell Hooks' writings about "engaged pedagogy." This is a way of teaching that holds the practice of freedom at the center of the learning and teaching processes. Hooks' view of freedom is not based on a concern for individualism but community. She writes: "In the last 20 years I have encountered many folks who say they are committed to freedom and justice for all, even though the way they live, the values and habits of being they institutionalize daily, in public and private rituals, help maintain the culture of domination, help create an unfree world," adding, "we live in chaos, uncertain about the possibility of building and sustaining real community."

Expanding on Paul's letter to the Romans, Hooks calls on all of us—professional educators and others—"to renew our minds" so we can participate in the transformation of schools, faith communities and broader society "so that the way we live, teach and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice and our love of freedom." This is the freedom of Jesus the Christ. We find this freedom through our engagement with his gospel, which grounds our theological and ethical understandings of peace, nonviolence and social justice. This faith heritage puts us at odds with some parts of our society, making us nonconformists, historically speaking.

I hope my foolishness will lead us to new sources of wisdom. I hope the wisdom we seek at MEA will be a source of renewal for the church and the communities where we live, teach and learn. TM

# Follow Jesus' example and spirit, not rules

Harold Miller's article "Membership Guidelines Allow Conversation" (February) is a great step forward in openness and dialogue on homosexuality. However, even a friendly discussion about homosexuality can be painful and draining for a homosexual person, since it involves defending their personal views, actions and beliefs. It's far easier to advocate patience and give a measured response when not having your way of life called into question. While not homosexual myself, I have been criticized about some of my views on sexuality, showing me how painful this subject can be for homosexuals. Additionally, key aspects of our theology and Jesus' example are often left out in this conversation.

Many young adults won't go anywhere near a church because of its views on homosexuality or because they'd be judged for living together with a committed partner before marriage. People outside the church believe the church's teachings on sexuality are not true or complete. The church would do itself and the world a favor by figuring out what's really important and what's not when it comes to ethical and spiritual considerations about sexuality.

**Struggle, disagreement and hurt feelings** are a part of life; Jesus says the truth divides. But even nuanced, modest statements like, "our church's teaching on sexuality is our best human understanding of God's way" need exploration. What happens if our best human understanding is wrong and needlessly causes suffering, alienation and drives away people earnestly searching for God or trying to walk Jesus' path? Jesus is much harder on those who commit this sin of "shutting the door of the kingdom" than other sins.

One of Jesus' biggest criticisms of the Pharisees is that they put their rules and interpretations ahead of God's priority of justice and mercy—the things that really matter in day-to-day life and in loving one's neighbor as oneself. Is it not possible that the church's teachings on homosexuality and sexuality shut the door of the kingdom on others? Yes, sexuality can be destructive, shallow or manipulative but not when genuine love between two people is the focus.

Jesus said nothing about homosexuality, and this is important because Anabaptists believe he's the clearest revelation of God and God's motivations—the principles, reasoning and spirit behind the rules. He said that before, it was like people had a slave or servant relationship to God. Who shares their inner workings, thoughts or secrets with mere slaves? Jesus said that now we are heirs and good friends of God, to whom secrets, inner understandings and motivations are shared.

This means it's our responsibility and privilege to know the hows and whys of any rules we hold and to make sure they mesh with practical, moral issues and the fruit they bear. Jesus questioned the accepted religious rules, yet we often prefer the status quo to searching and knocking. If we want to be true to Jesus, we also have to question and focus on lasting values, ethics and wisdom.

**A 2009 Gallup poll** shows a strong link between people's views on homosexuality and whether or not they know a homosexual person well. This leads me to think that some lack of understanding or fear may be involved, even if on an unconscious level. Jesus went out of his way to know and understand people not accepted by the religious majority. Furthermore, biblical scholarship reveals that homosexual acts or relationships in the Bible may have been strictly abusive or drastically unequal in power or age, a vast difference from issues of homosexual marriage and church membership discussed today.

Anabaptism came about because people questioned and searched the Bible for its meaning, relevance and transformational power. Anabaptists emphasized the ability of each person and small community to engage and interpret the Scriptures, experiencing the Spirit as revealing an inner, permanent, lasting truth.

We need to keep the spirit of Anabaptism alive by continuing to question Scripture and focusing on Jesus' example and spirit. We need to make sure we emphasize issues that truly matter without shutting the door to the kingdom in the faces of those who are searching and trying to enter. This requires looking to and understanding criticism of dominant Christian views on sexuality from both the outside and the inside.

Jesus said that only God judges, and with the measure we judge others, we will be judged. God is love, love is above all, and when two people love each other—regardless of their gender or orientation—it is special. The church should focus on helping people love one another better, not telling them their love is an abomination. TM

**Ethan Bodnaruk** is a Ph.D. student in ecological engineering and lives in Syracuse, N.Y.

Is it not possible that the church's teachings on homosexuality and sexuality shut the door of the kingdom on others?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Board will seek an interim editor

## Search process set for a new person to lead *The Mennonite*

The board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc., has decided to launch a search process for an interim editor for *The Mennonite*, the denominational publication of Mennonite Church USA, and its related web and social media channels.

According Barth Hague, board chair, the interim editor will function as the organization's CEO, overseeing administration, giving leadership to staff and editorial content, maintaining close working relationships with denominational leaders and continuing to guide the transition of the magazine into the digital age.

*The Mennonite*'s current editor and CEO, Everett J. Thomas, sent a letter of resignation on Aug. 1 with an effective date of Jan. 31, 2014; he has served since November 2000. Board policy stipulates that the editor give six months' notice when resigning.

**According to Hague,** Thomas is leaving the organization in good fiscal and operational health. During Thomas' tenure as editor, Hague says, "*The Mennonite* has grown from a print magazine to a content distribution system for Mennonite Church USA." Readership for the magazine, its two e-zines, website and Facebook page has grown to more than 37,000.

Hague and the board anticipate a strong transition to new leadership.

"This transition comes at a time when the board is grappling with the challenges of information distribution in light of new digital technologies," he says. "Our new interim editor will bring significant influence to that process and will be instrumental in helping *The Mennonite* chart a course for the future."

According to a classified ad (page 51), the board is looking for a seasoned editor and leader, with broad experience in writing for publication, supervising staff and creative personnel, managing financial affairs and strategic planning. According to the ad, he or she will possess a strong familiarity with Mennonite Church USA, its structure, congregations and history, and will have hands-on experience using the web and social media to meet organizational goals.

The assignment will be for up to two years, a timeline established by the board. The interim editor could also be a candidate for the editor role.

**The search committee is comprised** of Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA's associate executive director for churchwide operations, and four board officers: Hague, who is from Newton, Kan., Gerald Mast, vice chair, Bluffton, Ohio; Steve Edwards, treasurer, Goshen, Ind.; and Sheri Wenger, secretary, Lancaster, Pa. Hague chairs the search committee.

On Sept. 9, the board voted by email to set a search schedule that has the committee beginning to review applicants and interview candidates on Nov. 11 and the full board meeting via conference call in December to approve the final candidate. Mennonite Church USA bylaws stipulate that the Executive Board also approve the appointment. The committee plans to accept applications until the position is filled.

The job description can be found on the Mennonite Church USA website. Applicants are directed to send a cover letter and resumé to Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA, martyl@mennoniteusa.org, by Nov. 11. Candidates selected for consideration will be asked to supply references and writing samples.

**The Mennonite, Inc.,** is an Indiana not-for-profit corporation responsible for publishing *The Mennonite*. Mennonite Church USA bylaws require the corporation to be a "self-supporting entity," and it receives no funding through the Mennonite Church USA firstfruits system.—*Joanna Shenk for Mennonite Church USA*

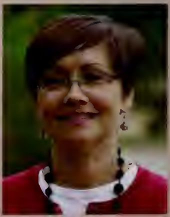
### Search committee for interim editor

Barth Hague

Gerald Mast

Sheri Wenger

Steve Edwards


Marty Lehman

# Discernment group begins work

## Will examine John Howard Yoder sexual abuse, church's response

On Aug. 27, Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman announced that he and Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., were forming "a discernment group to guide a process that we hope will contribute to healing for victims of John Howard Yoder's abuse as well as others deeply hurt by his harmful behavior."

In addition to Stutzman and Shenk, the committee includes Linda Gehman Peachey, who served as director of women's advocacy for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. in Akron, Pa.; Chuck Neufeld, who is conference minister for Illinois Mennonite Conference; Ted Koontz, professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and former colleague of Yoder; Regina Shands Stoltzfus, a professor at Goshen (Ind.) College.

Carolyn Holderread Heggen will serve as an advisor to the group. She is the author of *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*.

The discernment group met for the first time on Sept. 4 and 5 in Goshen, Ind. According to Stutzman, Holderread Heggen called together additional people to serve as a reference group for her as she serves in an advisory role. The three members are victims of sexual abuse.

On Sept. 16, Stutzman reported to the Executive Board about the group's work.

"These are the outcomes we've identified in a preliminary way," Stutzman said. "We anticipate sharing these outcomes with the Constituency Leaders Council—a gathering of conference ministers, moderators and representatives who meet twice a year. We welcome their counsel and shared ownership of the outcomes for this discernment process."

The following outcomes named by the discernment committee were subsequently approved by the Executive Board:

- In light of the reality that many and varied assumptions are being voiced about what occurred, we will design a process to fairly and accurately document the scope of Yoder's sexual abuse and the church's response to it after a careful review of the evidence. We will report this documentation for both a popular audience and a scholarly audience in separate venues. Since a full rendering of a report may take months to compile, we will soon report what we already know from earlier published evidence.
- We will publicly thank the women who tenaciously persisted over many years to bring Yoder's abuse to light to prevent further victimizations and to seek healing, those who valiantly care for victims of sexual abuse whether by Yoder or by other abusers, and those who've done the hard personal work to transcend their abuse with a readiness to work for the healing of their communities. We will also thank those in church leadership who worked hard to hold Yoder accountable with a desire for his restoration.
- We will cultivate a system-wide preparedness through conference leaders and links on the denominational website to provide resources for people who come forward seeking support for dealing with sexual abuse in their own experience. We will encourage denominational and conference leaders to provide educational experiences to better prepare pastors/leaders to care for victims of sexual abuse.
- We anticipate that in a large church gathering, most likely our next biennial convention, there will be a public service of lament, repentance and healing. Our hope is that the whole church will experience the grace of God together, including victims of sexual abuse, family members of Yoder, church leaders responsible for disciplinary processes, and all whose lives are touched by these relationships.
- We will explore the possibility of a denominational statement addressing a variety of dimensions of sexual abuse.—*Everett J. Thomas*

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# Ohio youth participate in leadership program

## First-ever retreat for high schoolers based on Values-Based Leadership Program

Photo provided

Participants play the game, "helium," in which the hola hoop must be lowered to the ground with everyone's finger touching the hoop. Clockwise from lower left: Cathy Harms, Rowen Miller, Micah Raber, Austin Zuercher, Julia Herbold, Bob Wenger, Nicole Chupp.

Ten youth and their mentors gathered Aug. 16-17 at Camp Luz in Orrville, Ohio, for the first-ever Youth Leadership Project—a partnership of Ohio Mennonite Conference, Central Christian School and Camp Luz.

This project is based on the Values-Based Leadership Program, a leadership training for adults rooted in an Anabaptist perspective that occurs annually in a two-session format at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa.

Jeremy Kauffman, executive director of Walnut Hills Retirement Community in Walnut Creek, Ohio, and Bethany Shue Nussbaum, advancement director of Central Christian School, also in Kidron, Ohio, planned and co-facilitated the August retreat. Kauffman and Nussbaum graduated from the Values-Based Leadership Program in 2008.

They wanted to help youth see the leadership opportunities already around them at their school, church and even a part-time job.

"Leadership is not a destination or something you arrive at from a title or position," says Nussbaum. "It's a privilege that anyone can choose to embrace throughout life, regardless of age or position."

Kauffman adds, "We wanted the youth to know that leadership skills can be learned and to be able to say, 'I can be a proactive person.' "

At the same time, both Kauffman and Nussbaum stressed that personalities develop over time. "With youth in particular, this is just a snapshot of where they are right then," says Kauffman. "[Youth] will continue to learn and grow."

Nicole Chupp, a junior at Dalton (Ohio) High School, says she appreciated the results from the DiSC personality assessment that she and the participants took during the retreat.

"It made us realize how we all have our strengths and weaknesses," Chupp says. She attends Chestnut Ridge Mennonite Church in Baughman, Ohio.

The youth will meet for a follow-up retreat Feb. 7-8, 2014. In between the two retreats, the youth will select a project that is a new initiative or change to an existing ministry in their church or school.

After approval from their lead pastor, the youth will work with their mentors and others in the congregation or school to plan the project. The ideas include a service trip, worship leading series, teaching Sunday school, redesigning the church website and more.

Micah Raber, a senior at Central Christian and a participant, plans to lead a program for local students on how to support international students at Central.

"[We can] include them and show God's love to them, even if they aren't Christians themselves," he says. He will work with Central's campus ministries team and his mentor.

Ohio Conference helped fund the retreat. Youth participants each paid $350, which covered each mentor also. Each youth participant who completes the program will receive a $500 scholarship from Ohio Conference toward post high school service or Mennonite education.—*Anna Groff*

Photo provided

Participants model their "special glasses" to practice the discipline of looking through lenses of other personality types, as part of their session on understanding others.

# Intercultural, interfaith school kit blitz

## Park View Mennonite Church produces more than 1,500 MCC school kits.

A lot of congregations put school kits together for distribution by Mennonite Central Committee. But how many produce more than 1,500? That was Park View Mennonite Church's experience on Aug. 18 in Harrisonburg, Va., when nearly 100 assembly-line volunteers packed a total of 1,562 kits.

The blitz was the result of tireless organizing by Dorothy Logan, who along with her small group first promoted the idea of an MCC School Kit blitz in 2008. Each year since on "Blitz Day," Park View's foyer and library area have been transformed into a production room.

This year was an international gathering including adults and children from the Islamic Association of the Shenandoah Valley, from the Center for Interfaith Engagement at Eastern Mennonite University, and from "Hilos en Comon" (Common Threads).

The latter group gathers Hispanic women from the Harrisonburg Community who meet weekly to work with fabrics and share life. On blitz day, they displayed their stories through individual wall hangings mounted in the fellowship room.—*Gordon Zook and Ervin Stutzman*

Mindi Warren

Children of the women from the Hilos en Comon group help with the school kit blitz at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

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# Seminary alum ministers to soldiers in Afghanistan

## Johns visits 750 members of his battalion during his 10-month tour of duty.

John Jacobs Jr., the only chaplain in his U.S. Army battalion, stood on a blood-soaked plywood board as he conducted a worship service for soldiers at a tiny combat outpost in the mountains of Afghanistan. Many wounded soldiers had been brought to this spot for transport back to a base hospital.

This lonely outpost was one of numerous stops for Jacobs as he traveled 5,000 miles—mostly by helicopter—to visit the 750 members of his battalion during his 10-month tour of duty in 2009.

Jacobs, who graduated from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., in 2004 with a Master of Divinity degree, planned to return to EMS this fall to enroll in Clinical Pastoral Education.

**The intensive hospital-based program** would prepare him for chaplaincy work among veterans and in hospitals and hospices. But he recently received notice that he is being called up in early 2014 for a 9- to 12-month deployment to the Middle East, to be stationed in Qatar.

Meanwhile, other military chaplains have enrolled at EMS this fall.

"Several new students this school year have expressed interest in being chaplains at veterans' hospitals or with active-duty personnel," says Laura Lehman Amstutz, the seminary's admissions director and communications coordinator. "The EMS focus on chaplain ministry and peace-and-justice theology is a valuable mix to these students who are sorting out how to care for those who have experienced war and military service firsthand."

Jacobs is part of the Virginia National Guard, so he must be ready for duty at any time—at home or abroad. Stateside duty includes accompanying a senior officer to notify parents that their son or daughter has been killed.

**In a war zone, a chaplain's duty** is to nurture the living, comfort the wounded and honor the dead. In addition to leading Christian services and performing various sacraments, Jacobs prayed with wounded soldiers from the battlefield and accompanied them to the operating room.

"In general, we are supposed to bring the presence of God," he says.

Jacobs also did a lot of marriage counseling for the many soldiers who were separated from their spouses.

Since Jacobs is a Protestant chaplain, he was also responsible for making sure that members of his battalion who were not Protestant had access to Catholic or other appropriate members of the clergy.

Jacobs loves people—all kinds of people. He enjoys the diversity he finds in the Army and the variety of people he met in Afghanistan. He learned to understand the motivation of the Taliban and enjoyed interacting with Muslims.

Photo provided

John Jacobs Jr., who earned an MDiv from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., in 2004, is a military chaplain. Here he conducts a service at Norfolk (Va.) Naval Base.

One man, using the Muslim word for clergyman, called Jacobs his "American imam."

The seed for military chaplaincy was planted in Jacobs' mind after he completed nearly 13 years of active duty in the U.S. Army. First he had to finish an undergraduate degree and then find a seminary to attend. He picked EMS, arriving with his wife and three children in 2001.

"EMS offered me a safe place to be myself and bare my soul," he says. "They didn't make me feel like I had to be a perfect person."

While in seminary he took part-time jobs, making sure that he was able to interact with "common people," which he figured would help him in future ministry. In fact, ministry started for him on the job. "I talked about faith with people who would never come to church," he said.

Jacobs and his wife, Diana Patterson, are both from Lancaster County, Pa. John was raised Presbyterian and Diana was Mennonite. They were married when he enlisted in the Army at age 21. His first Army career took them to Alaska, South Korea, Pennsylvania and Colorado.

Since his seminary days, the Jacobs family has been based in nearby Broadway, Va.

He hopes that a future job in hospital chaplaincy will bring more stability to his life and more focus to his career.—*Steve Shenk for Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

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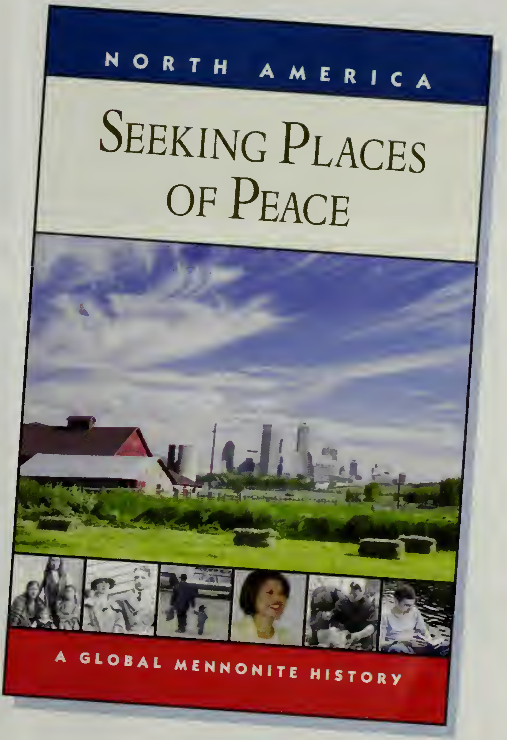

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# Members walk, bike, ride to church in Oklahoma

## Event raises over $1,000 for Mennonite Central Committee Global Family Fund.

Photos provided

More than 20 individuals rode four-wheelers to Turpin (Okla.) Mennonite Church on Aug. 11.

Four people rode horses to the church.

People came to Turpin (Okla.) Mennonite Church in some unusual ways on Aug. 11.

One person walked two miles to church. Another bicycled four miles to church. Four people rode horses four miles to church. One farmer drove his Volvo front loader tractor to church. One 78-year-old great-grandmother rode on the back of the pastor's motorcycle to church. Several drove antique pickups to church. More than 20 people rode four-wheelers to church.

Why? To raise money to help children in Bangladesh to get a better education and hope for a better life.

The idea originated with John Stoesz, the retiring regional director of Mennonite Central Committee. He decided to do a farewell bike ride to 50 churches in central Kansas during May to thank them for their support of MCC.

He invited churches to plan a Bike to Church Sunday and use it as a fund-raiser to support MCC's Global Family Educational projects in places such as Bangladesh, Tanzania, Serbia, Honduras and Syria.

Not many Turpin Mennonite members cycle, so they broadened the idea of biking to church by including a variety of forms of alternate transportation to church.

The money raised, almost $1,100, will go for educational projects in Bangladesh.—*Terry Rediger*

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# Is fair trade the best answer?

## Fair-trade cooperatives out of reach for the most marginalized coffee farmers

Fair trade may not be the panacea for coffee farmers that its proponents want it to be, according to Chris D. Gingrich, economics professor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and former student Emily J. King.

Based on research, they found that the fair-trade system for marketing coffee—under which farmers receive a minimum price for their product regardless of the market price—provides limited benefits to a tiny minority of farmers worldwide, despite the premium that consumers pay.

"Consumers spend between $2 and $10 extra on fair trade for every dollar that reaches participating farmers," wrote the authors in, "Does Fair Trade Fulfill the Claims of Its Proponents? Measuring the Global Impact of Fair Trade on Participating Coffee Farmers," published in the 2012 issue of *The Journal of Cooperatives*.

"By comparison, projects that aim to improve coffee farmers' production, processing and marketing skills show the potential to provide benefits at a lower cost and also reach a broader clientele."

Gingrich and King say when coffee prices are low, fair trade does benefit participating farmers, offering each producer as much as $100 per year on the average. But when market prices for coffee are relatively high, the annual benefits from fair trade fall to $35 per participating farmer.

"Those in the fair-trade system are doing fairly well," Gingrich says. "But, in order to join a fair-trade cooperative, farmers usually have to be land owners, which means that fair-trade cooperatives are out of reach for the most economically disadvantaged and marginalized farmers."

Proponents of fair trade argue that the true benefits of fair trade "extend beyond higher prices for coffee farmers," benefits that Gingrich and King acknowledge. "Fair-trade farmers receive access to credit and technical information," they say, as well as social benefits, such as increased women's leadership and community development programs.

Nevertheless, in their article they tentatively concluded that "fair trade may not be the most cost-effective method of benefiting coffee producers."

They suggested that general development projects, such as quality improvements focused on productivity, may be able to reach more of the most disadvantaged producers, including those who do not own the land they farm or who are not cooperative members for other reasons.—*Kara Lofton and Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU*

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# Mennonites, Muslims eat *halal* meal together

## More than 100 individuals participate in the Abraham Project's first meal.

The Abraham Project launched its first event Sept. 6-7. The project is an initiative among Lancaster (Pa.) district Mennonite churches and leaders of the Islamic Community Center of Lancaster who are working to create a space for Muslims and Christians to come together and share stories to build peace.

More than 100 joined a *halal* meal hosted by James Street Mennonite Church on Sept. 6. *Halal* describes food that Muslims are allowed to eat or drink under Islamic Shari'ah.

Brian Miller, pastor of Sunnyside Mennonite Church, says the attendance at the meal was about 75 percent Mennonite and 25 percent Muslim, with a wide range of ages represented. The previous night was a screening of the documentary *Waging Peace*, followed by discussion.

Miller says his congregation sponsored a Turkish and Iraqi family—both of whom were Muslim. Getting to know these families "stirred the energy for intentionally building bridges with the Muslim community," he says.

Through Eastern Mennonite Missions' connections with the Islamic Community Center, Miller began meeting regularly with Ibrahim Qaisi and other Islamic leaders.

Qaisi also spoke at the meal. Miller says the next steps include finding ways to participate in joint Christian-Muslim service projects.—*Anna Groff*

Preston Sean Photography

RaeDella Wenger (left) of James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., serves food to Nimo Dalal.

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# Planting a church, one connection at a time

## Mennonite Mission Network helps make 2,000 miles of connections.

Independently, the San Lucas, Mexico, church-planting efforts could go far. But through 2,000 miles of connections, the group is building a church with help from partners: North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, the Mexican Mennonite Anabaptist Evangelical Church Conference's (CIEAMM) pastors and Mennonite Mission Network's connections.

It was also a long time coming.

At North Goshen Mennonite Church, José Tellez was restless in a church pew. Inspired by Bible studies in his church, José wanted to give the same opportunity for spiritual growth to his family in San Martín, Mexico, which is about an hour outside Mexico City.

**From its beginning in 1936, North Goshen** has reached out to its community. As an extension of their North Goshen tradition, the Tellez family reached out to their community in San Martín. "It grew from a personal vision to a formal project of the congregation," says Mark Schloneger, the pastor at North Goshen.

In Mexico City, CIEAMM was also planting churches. They had a similar vision and challenge: planting churches to inspire a living faith. How do you introduce Anabaptism in a culture that is marinated in a "state religion" (as José Elizalde describes it)? Elizalde grew up in Mexico, attends North Goshen Mennonite Church and is the liaison to the church plant.

Five years ago, people from North Goshen contacted Linda Shelly, director for Latin America at Mennonite Mission Network. They needed help nourishing the local ministry in San Lucas, envisioned the value of a local partner and asked for contact information for Mexican Mennonites in that region. When they contacted CIEAMM, their separate visions combined. They now collaborate on their church-planting efforts as equal partners.

In the beginning stages, CIEAMM supplied the church planters. César Marín led Bible studies, and eventually, CIEAMM sent the current pastor, Mario Lopez Martinez, and his wife, Carmen Reyes Hernandez.

**Its Bible studies and children's ministries** are one reason why the church plant already has 30 attendees. Yet more important than what the Lopez Martinez family does is who they are.

The Lopez Martinez family members were driving along the road one day when they saw a boy, his face bloody from a street fight. The final destination was forgotten. The family stopped, cared for the boy and drove him home. "Mario and Carmen reach out to people right in their midst, instead of asking people to join them," says Schloneger.

Partnering in ministry has its challenges. As the Mexican church leaders began talking about more church plants, Mission Network was contacted once again, and this led to a joint visit in May. Each partner has their own vision, so we needed to learn to trust each other, says Schloneger. "Working with Linda, we were able to develop trust," he says. "That was key to developing trust [among] the other partners."

Photo provided

Jose Elizalde, North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church liaison to the San Lucas church, reads Scripture at the church plant's worship service.

**Inspiring others to be involved** in the ministry despite the language barrier is a real challenge, says Elizalde. North Goshen Mennonite Church translates its worship service into Spanish, but not everyone is bilingual or can reach out to their southern neighbors.

However, connections between North Goshen and the San Lucas church are growing. From the beginning, a handful of North Goshen's congregation originated from San Lucas' community. Yet the church plant became real to North Goshen when one of its members returned to the San Lucas community in September 2012. Elizalde and Schloneger could tell that the North Goshen congregation's commitment increased as they reported about their visit to the church plant. In the background, photos scrolled. But one face jumped out at the congregation: the man who had returned. They knew his face, his history and his wife and children who were sitting across the room. Elizalde hopes to build on these relationships to create "friends of San Lucas" instead of mere fund-raisers. "It's about more than asking for funds [for the church plant]; it's about partnership," he says.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

# K'ekchi' women develop musical talent

## Women practice three times a week for eight months to prepare for retreat.

Phyllis Groff

A group of K'ekchi' women play their instruments together in worship in Guatemala.

K'ekchi' Mennonite women in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, played musical instruments and led worship during their annual two-day women's retreat in June for the first time in the retreat's history.

In the past, musical instruments in K'ekchi' Mennonite churches have been played only by men.

The church is not theologically opposed to women playing musical instruments in church, but because K'ekchi' men have the money to purchase instruments and often have more schooling than women, they have typically been the worship leaders in the churches.

At last year's women's retreat, Maria Chub, the newly elected president of the K'ekchi' Mennonite Women's Association, was sad to see no worship band accompanying the women. Chub began to dream of empowering women from her church to organize a worship band.

**Chub talked with her pastor** about her vision for teaching women to play musical instruments, and he agreed it was a good idea. Together they asked the men in the worship band at their church if they would give permission for women to practice with their equipment. Tomas Bok, a deacon gifted at playing the guitar, agreed to teach the women.

When the church invited women to learn to play instruments, eight women responded.

Each of the women committed herself to two-hour practice sessions held three times a week for eight months in order to prepare for the 2013 women's retreat.

The Chiyaxut church took offerings to purchase guitars for each of the women, and later the women's group in the church took special offerings to pay for the women's transportation to the retreat.

Bok took time off from his work to accompany and support them during the two-day retreat.

Ninety-six women from 23 different churches attended the retreat. Some traveled over three hours from their home communities in order to attend.

**The group of women leading worship** at the retreat delighted the participants, many of whom had never seen women playing musical instruments in a church setting.

During the retreat, the women discussed how to help community members who have few financial resources, such as widows and families with ongoing illnesses that drain the family's resources.

They received an offering for Amalia, a district leader in the K'ekchi' Mennonite Church who needed to have two of her toes removed after developing gangrene in her foot, which caused unexpected financial losses for her family.

Since the retreat, the women have continued to use their new skills.

The women now lead worship occasionally for the Sunday morning services at their church in Chiyaxut. Two other congregations have also begun instrument lessons for women in their communities.—*Chris Fretz and Phyllis Groff of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

# Price told the John Howard Yoder story

## As religion reporter at *The Elkhart Truth,* he interviewed three victims.

In 1992, secular newspaper reporter Tom Price reported on allegations of sexual abuse against John Howard Yoder, a former professor at then Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. Price's reportage included six articles from June 29-July 16 (see the list in the September issue). To our knowledge, these were the first published revelations of the behaviors for which Yoder would eventually be disciplined. Our editorial team crafted the following questions for Price.—*Everett J. Thomas*

**Q. How did you first learn of the situation?**

A: Sometime in late summer 1985 or early fall, after I had completed my on-campus work for a master's degree in journalism at Indiana University in Bloomington, I was home looking for work and spending part of my spare time studying theology with the pastor of the American Baptist congregation I attended in Chicago. He also taught an introductory theology course at a Chicago-area seminary, and we met a couple of times per week to discuss the books we were reading. During those discussions, John Howard Yoder's name came up. Neither of us was Mennonite.

Tom Price

At the time, I didn't know any Mennonites other than a former youth pastor from that congregation who later attended then Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., and became a Mennonite pastor. I had read *The Politics of Jesus* in the early 1980s in college and was very influenced by it as well as by Ron Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* and Tom Sine's *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy*, so I was clearly emerging theologically as an Anabaptist. My pastor/seminary adjunct friend mentioned to me, "Did you hear that John Howard Yoder was asked to leave the seminary where he was president because of allegations of sexual misconduct?" This was seven years before my articles were published, six to eight months before I moved to Elkhart and joined *The Elkhart Truth* as a reporter, and about three years before I became the newspaper's first full-time religion writer.

In the spring of 1992, when I learned that Bethel College, in North Newton, Kan., had decided to "dis-invite" Yoder from a scheduled speech, I realized the matter was not settled and began trying to discover what really happened, what was going on and why.

**How often did you speak directly with Yoder?**

I first spoke with him in the late 1980s, when he was part of an "Ethics and Economics" lecture series at the Elkhart Public Library. He was a very engaging lecturer but was extremely awkward in personal interactions afterward. I did an extensive interview with him about politics, the 1990 midterm elections and *The Politics of Jesus* for a religion section feature in November 1990. The picture I took of him as part of that feature ended up accompanying the articles published in June and July 1992. After learning of the incident at Bethel, I telephoned him and spoke extensively with him about what happened with the college. I obviously took notes of that conversation (I typed and printed out all phone interviews in that era, and I usually got a highly accurate transcript), but I do not have the notes from that phone conversation. What I remember—not knowing whether this idea originated with him or me—was going away with the feeling that I needed to investigate this matter because there was an outside chance that his actions were being misinterpreted, he was being blackmailed, that his livelihood was being threatened.

We spoke a few more times by telephone. I let him know at some point that I was doing my own research into what was happening. I spoke with him after some initial drafts were written, and I spoke with him before the initial article and the subsequent series were published. He did not want to say much on the record. He clearly was not willing to respond to the list of allegations I compiled from my interviews with the women or to address on the record what he had written in unpublished works. I no longer have the notes of what was said off the record.

**Who was the primary staff person at Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference with whom you spoke?**

I spoke with Harold Bauman, whom I had not met before. I also spoke with David Helmuth, who was then chair of the Church Life Commission and pastor of First Mennonite of Middlebury, Ind., whom I also had not met previously. Keep in mind there were two investigations, also the task force at Prairie Street Mennonite Church. For that, I spoke with pastors Harold and Ruth Yoder, usually Harold (no relation).

I also spoke off the record (or not for attribution) with several people who were either part of the task force, part of the Church Life Commission or privy to their findings. This led to my first conflict with the Church Life Commission. I was ready to go into print with an article—citing anonymous sources close to the investigation and confirmed by a commission member—that the commission had reached a decision to suspend John Howard Yoder's ministerial credentials.

When I spoke to a member of the commission asking for a formal comment/response for the record, that person told me the commission's alleged action was not an action until it publicly said it was an action and that if I published an article saying it had reached a decision, it would be untrue and I would be subject to potential repercussions.

They also began trying to discover where the leaks were and at one point called me back, claiming to have found out who it was. It was then, in consultation with my editors, that we decided we were not going to be subject to the commission's decision and action one way or the other. I would write articles that would tell the story as discovered through my interviews and reporting, and the newspaper would publish it when those stories were ready, whether the commission had reached a decision or not.

I happened to be working our Saturday night police and breaking news shift for Sunday's newspaper when a representative of the commission came in with a two-page press release addressed to "Elkhart Truth, Mennonite Institutions, Mennonite Colleges and Seminaries, Mennonite Conferences, Mennonite Press, Prairie Street Task Force" (in that order). We were close to publishing my articles, and what I recall is that the person had a grin as if to say, "We're getting this out first."

**Why did the victims want to remain anonymous?**

Fear of retaliation by John Howard Yoder or by others within the church—for fear they'd face discrimination within the church or by church institutions or they might be ostracized. Then there's simply the shame and embarrassment associated with any sexual assault. Newspapers didn't publish the names of assault victims, and it was common to grant interview subjects anonymity for a variety of reasons.

As I was investigating the story, I put out word in many circles that I was looking for women who were willing to talk on the record and that I/my newspaper would be willing to grant anonymity. (Just to be clear, I knew their identities.) With these three women, who were part of the eight women who came forward, it was a highly unusual situation in that they were known to the Church Life Commission and the Prairie Street Task Force.

**Describe the internal editorial processes employed by *The Elkhart Truth*.**

By 1992, I had been working for *The Elkhart Truth* for seven years. I had a lot of freedom as a reporter. At the time, it was the smallest-circulation newspaper in the nation to devote full-time resources to a religion writer. After the "dis-invitation" incident, I began talking to sources, doing research and interviewing sources and potential sources. I spent a lot of time in the AMBS library and other libraries, going through records and documents—especially at first as I tried to identify potential sources. I did all this in addition to my usual writing/reporting responsibilities. As I said before, I at least had this idea at the outset when I began my work that there was a chance that John Howard Yoder could have been targeted almost punitively.

Having widely put out word that I was interested in speaking with subjects, they initially contacted me. I didn't speak with them all at once because they surfaced separately. When I did interview the women, I usually conducted the interviews by phone from home, producing typewritten (on a computer) transcripts of our conversations. The first drafts of my stories were even written at home, where my wife and I were experiencing the first four months of my oldest daughter's life.

I quickly was convinced that the women were eminently credible—not only by their stories and the details but by who they were because of their positions within the church and/or society. I tried to convey that in my articles as much as possible without putting in details that could identify them. With each of the women's stories, when I reached my final draft, I read back their quotes to them as well as my paraphrases of the alleged incidents.

I continued to pursue other potential sources without success.

> I put out word in many circles that I was looking for women who were willing to talk on the record and that I/my newspaper would be willing to grant anonymity.

I knew I had more content than could be used in even a lengthy article, so my primary editor encouraged me to think of a multipart series. Each article was read and edited by multiple editors (at least five or six)—at least two of whom were women—as well as our managing editor and our publisher. They were even reviewed by a lawyer, but I don't know which lawyer reviewed them. I don't recall any changes after the lawyer's review. For the published series, the most changes were to the second segment featuring the women's stories, which I tried to treat delicately. They were further sanitized in the editing process. We all agreed that, after all, *The Elkhart Truth* was a family newspaper.

There was potentially a delay between release of the Church Life Commission press release on June 27 and the publication of the first article in Monday afternoon's newspaper, June 29. I can't recall for certain today whether the delay was for me to talk to John Howard Yoder and/or other sources one more time or because of what transpired next.

In theory I knew that if I had a statement in hand by 9 p.m. Saturday, there was at least three hours in which the story eventually published on June 29 could have been ready for Sunday's newspaper.

After the first article was published, the debate arose among our editors about whether anything else would be published. I had articles ready to go that pretty closely resembled at least most of the segments of the five-part series that was eventually published.

But one editor in particular insisted the articles were "just too much" about somebody "nobody ever heard of." I shot back that such a statement said more about this particular editor's lack of knowledge. I was already upset with him because of something that happened once the first article was published.

The Associated Press' Indiana Bureau at the time called at least the major newspapers each day to ask if they had anything for the wire. From there, stories would likely go on the national wire. When the AP editor called that day, that editor said our newspaper had nothing for AP that day. Our managing editor tried to mediate our disagreements, and my desk editor was just as shocked about the reluctance as I was.

It was a long two weeks in which I stewed and went through usual daily assignments as I considered my options. I was strongly considering whether I would quit if they didn't publish the articles. But with a 4-month-old daughter at home, I didn't know if I could follow through. I brainstormed possible options, including my thought of giving the articles to another publication just so they'd be published. In the end, the managing editor decided we would publish. I completed interviews with several theologians around the country, getting their reaction to the initial report (in part as a response to the one editor's comment that John Howard Yoder was somebody "nobody ever heard of").

**Did any men say they were also victims**?

No men told me they were victims; neither do I ever remember hearing of any man described as a victim.

**How did the local Mennonite community respond to your reporting?**

As a reporter who frequently got calls (even at home) from readers, I was prepared for a thunderstorm of response. What I was not prepared for was the lack of response that occurred. Our newspaper received two letters: one for publication and another whose writer requested that it not be published. The predominant mood in the community seemed to be one of silence.

I sensed a distance from some former sources in the Mennonite community. Others did speak privately with me about the articles. The most common response was what I heard from one man, who said something along the lines of, "I hated to read all that you had written about what was happening with a prominent member of our church, but I was glad that it finally came out in the way that it did."

In these days before the Internet, the news seemed to trickle out. Every few weeks, I would get a call from some publication—secular newspapers and religious periodicals—that would ask me to fax them a copy of the articles. (I had a long list of Mennonite publications and editors who had requested that I fax them the articles on the day of publication. I knew word was filtering out.) My mom was surprised to be reading the *Chicago Tribune* one morning in late August and come across my name in the newspaper with a reference to the articles.

There was one other response that was significant. In 1996, after our son Christopher was born with congenital defects and died after 21 minutes of life, my wife and I wrote about how our congregation (Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Ind.) cared for us through the experience in a piece that was published in *Gospel Herald*. I received a very gracious and caring card from Annie Yoder, John's wife, and immediately responded with a card of my own. For me, that was a very healing experience.

**To your knowledge, did Yoder ever apologize for what he did?**

He had not at the time of the articles. I left *The Elkhart Truth* in November 1995, before the process had concluded. I was not aware of what happened later.

**How do you feel about how the Mennonite press handled this story?**

The Mennonite press responded to the allegations in a similar fashion to the rest of the church institutions. In an ideal world, perhaps the church press would have been more vigorous and independent.

One of my closest friends was forced to resign as editor in 2002 from another denomination's church publication after writing an article about a pastor accused in court documents of having sexual intercourse with two minor girls. The organization's interim executive director said my friend needed to find a "hard-hitting journalism" position that didn't require "the same high degree of spiritual sensitivity." Perhaps Mennonite editors felt similar constraints, whether direct or indirect.

**Did you follow up with victims after the Church Life Commission's decision? How did they respond**?

I followed up with them after the initial article was published on the suspension. They seemed pleased the church had heard their voices, but they were also interested in seeing their stories made public and a little unnerved about what was going on for almost two weeks at my newspaper.

I saw two victims one or two months later and heard about some of the hostile reaction they were getting or hearing indirectly from the church. In some quarters, they were being called "Allegators" who "ate the reputations of godly men."

By the time the process was judged by Indiana-Michigan Conference to have reached a successful outcome, I was no longer in contact with them to know whether they, too, felt it was successful.—*Tom Price lives in South Bend, Ind. He is a writer and communications consultant, formerly having served as director of communications for Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Board of Missions after leaving his position with* The Elkhart Truth.

### CALENDAR

**University Mennonite Church** in State College, Pa., is celebrating our ***50th anniversary on Oct. 19-20***. For details on joining us for the weekend call 814-234-2039 or email mcbru2@verizon.net.

**Clinton Frame Mennonite Church** will reminisce, fellowship and give thanks while ***celebrating 150 years together as a congregation***. All the festivities will be held Oct. 12-13 at the church located at 63846 County Road 35, Goshen, Ind. For more information, see the church website at www.clintonframe.org or phone the church office at 574-642-3165.

Helping worship leaders discover the best new songs is the goal of ***New Songs for Worship***, to be held Sat., Nov. 2, 9:30 a.m. -12:15 p.m. at CMU's Chapel, 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard in Winnipeg. For more information, or to register, contact clonghurst@cmu.ca or call 204-487-3300. A second New Songs for Worship workshop is planned for Jan. 25, 2014, in Winkler, Manitoba.

***Cultivating Solutions: Harvesting Hope***: Plan now to join us in Wichita, Kan., Nov.7-10 for **Mennonite Economic Development Associates'** (MEDA's) annual convention – 4 days of inspiration, information, networking and fun! MEDA serves the working poor around the world, bringing dignity and joy by helping them grow sustainable, locally owned small businesses that are not dependent on charity for survival. Plenary sessions feature Robert Thompson (global food issues), David Haskell (social entrepreneurship), and MEDA's own Marion Good, plus the MEDA Year in Review and a celebration of MEDA's 60th anniversary. Go to www.medaconvention.org for full descriptions of plenary sessions, seminars, tours and online registration, or call 800-665-7026 for more information.

### WORKERS

**Driediger, Penny**, was ordained for chaplaincy and CPE supervisory ministry at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., on Aug. 25 at Crossroads Mennonite Church.

**Kauffman, Aaron M.**, was licensed as Global Ministries Director of Virginia Mennonite Missions, Harrisonburg, Va., on Aug. 18 at Zion Mennonite Church.

**Nissley Stauffer, Amy**, was installed as associate pastor of congregational life at Hesston Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., on July 14.

### OBITUARIES

**Barnard, Randall Eugene**, 73, Springs, Pa., died Sept. 19. Spouse: Rose Marie Holliday Barnard. Parents: Carlton and Roberta Richter Barnard. Children: Christopher, Pamela Brant, Lisa Brant; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. A private funeral service will be held in Grantsville, Md.

**Boshart, Esther Wagler**, 91, Goshen, Ind., formerly of Wayland, Iowa, died Aug. 9. Spouse: Dennis Boshart (deceased). Parents: John S. and Ada Hirschy Wagler. Children: Wasley, Ronald, Rodney, Peggy Milton, Dean Ledru, Berdene Boshart; 11 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 17 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

**Conrad, Willard Dean**, 88, Hesston, Kan., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Hettie Conrad. Children: Cathy Conrad, Dan, Steve, Sara Conrad, Nancy Conrad Schroeder. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Eigsti, Joseph Milton**, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 3. Spouse: Norma "Jean" Litwiller Eigsti (deceased). Parents: William and Anna Hartzler Eigsti. Children: Eldon, Donna Roth, Calvin, Marcia Eigsti; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 7 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa, Ill.

**Erb, Betty L.**, 84, Hartville, Ohio, died Sept. 14. Parents: Abe and Elizabeth Coblentz Erb. Funeral: Sept. 16 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

**Erb, Fern Irene Troyer**, 92, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 2. Spouse: J. Frederick Erb (deceased). Parents: Miles and Mary Reiff Troyer. Children: Paul Frederick Erb, Mary Erb Nitzsche, Rachel Erb Beckler; seven grandchildren; one great-granddaughter. Funeral: May 11 at Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

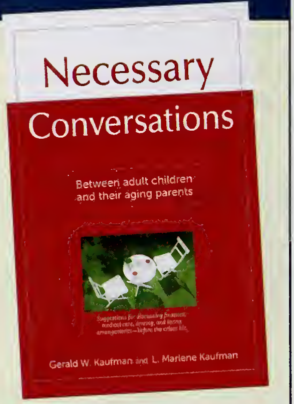
**Frank, Virginia Mae Sauder**, 77, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 19, of cancer. Parents: Roy and Selma Gautsche Sauder. Children: Charles, Cynthia Frank; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 23 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**Freed, Cleta Stover Moyer**, 76, Harleysville, Pa., died Aug. 3. Spouse: Howard Derstein Freed. Parents: Willis B. and Sadie Stover Moyer. Children: Ronald, Daniel, Kathy Martin; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

**Fretz, J. Herbert**, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 10. Spouse: Helen Habegger Fretz. Parents: Jacob R. and Mary Rickert Fretz. Children: Barbara Ross, Susan Bouschele, James H., Joseph H.; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 17 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Before the Crises Hit—*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**Friesen, Peter "Pete,"** 92, Altona, Manitoba, died July 17. Spouse: Anne Hildebrand Friesen. Parents: Peter G. and Susanna Loeppky Friesen. Funeral: July 23 at Bregthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Gerber, Harry Dean**, 82, Tiskilwa, Ill., died July 20 of a stroke. Spouse: Kathryn Elaine Rocke Gerber. Parents: Aldis A. and Sarah Anna Lehman Gerber. Children: Pamela Kaufmann, Bradley, Andrea Horst; five grandchildren. Funeral: July 25 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa.

**Graber, DeLayne Richard**, 74, Freeman, S.D., died Sept. 10, of a heart attack. Spouse: Rita Joan Fliginger Graber. Parents: Richard H. and Leone Ortman Graber. Children: David, Tom; four grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 14 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

**Grieser, Glenford Gene**, 68, Hamilton, Ind., died July 23. Spouse: Karen Stuckey Grieser. Child: Charlie Grieser. Funeral: July 29 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

**Harper, Travis Paul**, 8 days, Buhler, Kan., died Sept. 5. Parents: Matthew Phares Harper and Brooke Andrea Ebeling Harper. Sibling: Natalie Harper. Funeral: Sept. 9 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan.

**Heisey, Velma Irene Climenhaga**, 95, Harrisonburg, Va., died Sept. 2. Spouse: J. Wilmer Heisey (deceased). Parents: Laban and Sarah Priscilla Bert Climenhaga. Children: Paul, Nancy Heisey Longacre, Mary Jane Heisey Harnden; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 7 at Strite Auditorium of Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg.

**Hertzler, Aldus K.**, 91, Blooming Glen, Pa., died Sept. 7. Spouse: Ruth Alderfer Hertzler. Parents: Aldus and Ellen Kratz Hertzler. Children: Libby Hollenbach, Alice Shenk, Emily Swartley; 14 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 12 at Souderton Mennonite Summit View Auditorium, Souderton, Pa.

**Klippenstein, Anne**, 87, Altona, Manitoba, died Aug. 12. Spouse: Martin Klippenstein (deceased). Parents: Peter P. and Susanna Krahn Giesbrecht. Children: Iris, Audrey, Tanya, Karla, Peter, Warren; 15 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 16 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Kulp, James D.**, 70, Middletown, Va., died Aug. 5. Spouse: Joan C. Kulp. Parents: Floyd and Gladys Derstein Kulp. Children: J. Bradley, Carlin, Brenda Donigan, Christina Kulp; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 11 at Stephens City Mennonite Church, Stephens City, Va.

**Landis, Ralph H.**, 86, Souderton, Pa., died July 26. Spouse: Betty Jean Ziegler Landis (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Alverda Landis. Children: Linda Marie Landis, Laverne Z., Betty Ann Clemmer; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 30 at Souderton Mennonite Homes Chapel.

**Martens, Henry**, 92, Altona, Manitoba, died Aug. 8. Spouse: Tina Hildebrand Martens. Parents: Jacob P. and Marie Friesen Martens. Children: Myra, Connie, Colleen, Terry; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Martin, Henry**, 91, Waterloo, Ontario, died Aug. 7. Spouse: Marcella Schwartzentruber Martin. Spouse: Irene Martin (deceased). Parents: Isiah and Nancy Martin. Children: Cindy Curtis, Linda Martin, Susan Martin, Nancy Snyder; step-children: Gwen Graber, Barry Roth, Chuck Roth; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo.

**Martin, Melba F. Weaver**, 73, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 5. Spouse: Willard "Dick" Martin (deceased). Parents: Oscar R. and Bessie Hoover Weaver. Funeral: Aug. 9 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Miller, Ivan E.**, 91, Hesston, Kan., died Sept. 8. Spouse: Floris Jantz Miller (deceased). Parents: Sol J. and Bertha Beachy Miller. Child: Phyllis Miller. Funeral: Sept. 12 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Miller, Mabel Fern Brenneman**, 94, Kalona, Iowa, died June 24. Spouse: J. John J. Miller (deceased). Parents: Will and Nancy Miller Brenneman. Children: Linda Rowaold, John David, Marlin, Jim, Gary; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

**Miller, Vern Loyal**, 86, Mantua, Ohio, died Aug. 7, of heart failure. Spouse: Helen Marie Hostetler Miller (deceased). Parents: John Peter and Elizabeth Hostetler Miller. Children: Robin, Renita Strange, Rosina Berkey, Rochele Beachy, Ryan; 13 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 12 at Lee Heights Community Church, Cleveland, Ohio.

**Roynon, James Walter**, 62, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 2, of cancer. Spouse: Nancy Spiess Roynon. Parents: Walter and Maxine Bame Roynon. Children: Bradley, Taryn Myers, Drew, Colin; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Rufenacht, Evelyn Seiler Short**, 89, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 20. Spouse: Willard Rufenacht (deceased). Funeral: Dale E. Short (deceased). Parents: Clarence and Christena Beck Seiler. Children: Marcia Wernet, Rodger Short, Gareth Short, Douglas Short, Sandra Phillips; seven stepchildren, Judith Short, Lynette King, Richard Rufenacht, Rex Rufenacht, Gary Rufenacht; nine grandchildren; 12 step-grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; four great-step-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 24 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Saltzman, Joseph Howard**, 83, Wellman, Iowa, died Aug. 15. Parents: Daniel and Helen Sutter Saltzman, Funeral: Aug. 19 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

**Schantz, John Dale**, 85, Albany, Ore., died Aug. 19. Spouse: Marjorie Wittrig Schantz. Parents: Peter, Jr., and Barbara Detweiler Schantz. Children: Roger, Charles, Nancy Schantz; three grandchildren; one great-grandson. Funeral: Aug. 22 at Albany Mennonite Church.

**Stauffer, Clarence**, 100, Milford, Neb., died Aug. 11. Spouse: Viola Troyer Stauffer (deceased). Children: Larry, Rosemary Martin, Roger, Jon, Victor; 12 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 14 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

**Studer, Gerald C.**, 86, Lansdale, Pa., died Aug. 1. Spouse: Marilyn Kreider Studer (deceased). Parents: Martin Gotleib Studer and Edna Lucille Blough Studer. Children: Jerri Longacre, Maria Fluck; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

**Swartzendruber, Edith Ruby,** 88, Pigeon, Mich., died Sept. 8. Spouse: Leon Swartzendruber (deceased). Parents: Aaron and Catherine Schwartzentruber Ruby. Children: Ronald, Evelyn Weier, Roger; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 14 at Michigan Avenue Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

**Wiebe, Howard Ray**, 69, Aberdeen, Idaho, died July 25. Spouse: Nancy Smith Wiebe. Parents: Karl and Frieda Isaak Wiebe. Children: Julie Escobedo, Mike, Doug, Jeff; eight grandchildren. Funeral: July 30 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

**Yoder, Leo R.**, 95, Archbold, Ohio, died July 21. Spouse: Sylvia Mishler Yoder (deceased). Parents: Joe D. and Annie P. Yoder Yoder. Children: Sheryl Miller, Eileen Myers, Joe D.; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 25 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

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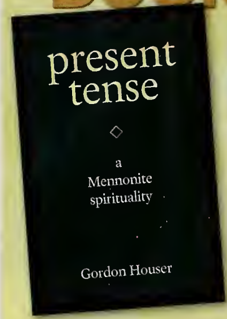
# Books from the editors


present tense
a Mennonite spirituality
Gordon Houser

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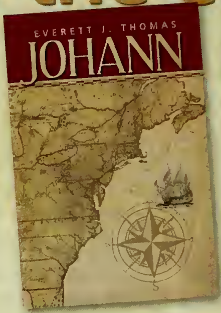
Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners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—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

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—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

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***Shine: Living in God's Light***, a new Sunday school curriculum produced by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, is accepting applications for ***writers***, Early Childhood through Junior Youth age groups, for 2015–2016. See job posting and online application at www.ShineCurriculum.com. Application deadline is Dec. 31, 2013.

**Kalona Mennonite Church** of Kalona, Iowa, a congregation of about 250 members, is seeking a ***full-time associate pastor***. This person will serve alongside a lead pastor and have normal preaching and administrative responsibilities. Other duties include a focus on youth and young adult ministries as well as nurturing spiritual growth and faith commitment. Interested persons can request a position description and congregational information by contacting Frank Yoder at franklin-yoder@uiowa.edu or conference minister Tim Detweiler at timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org. All candidates must have an updated Ministerial Leadership Information Form (MLI) on file with Mennonite Church USA.

The **board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc.**, seeks an ***interim editor*** for *The Mennonite*, the flagship publication of Mennonite Church USA, and its related Web and social media channels. The interim editor will function as the organization's CEO, overseeing administration, giving leadership to staff and editorial content, maintaining close, working relationships with denominational leaders and guiding the transition of the magazine into the digital age. The ideal candidate will be a seasoned editor and leader, with broad experience in writing for publication, supervising staff and creative personnel, managing financial affairs and strategic planning. He or she will possess a strong familiarity with Mennonite Church USA, its structure, churches and history, and will have hands-on experience using the Web and social media to meet organizational goals. Interested individuals should submit a cover letter and resume to Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 1, Elkhart, IN 46517. For best consideration, please submit by Nov. 11. Candidates selected for consideration will be asked to supply references and writing samples. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

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- **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND** (Jan 30-Feb 19/2015)
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- **HOLY LAND TOUR** with Pastor Phil Wagler (Feb 12-20/2014)
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- **HOLY LAND TOUR** with Pastor Darrel Toews (Oct 19-28/2014)
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- **EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL** with Tom Yoder Neufeld (May 6-23/2015)

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- **EUROPEAN HERITAGE** with John Ruth (June 24-July 7/2014)
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- **RUSSIA & UKRAINE: THE MENNONITE STORY** (May 19-June 6/2015)
- **EUROPEAN HERITAGE** with John Ruth (June 10-23/2015)
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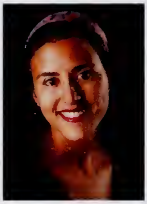
I certify that all information furnished in this is true and complete.
Everett J. Thomas, Editor

# The healing power of nonresistance



**Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz** lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

I have come to a point in my life where the daily in-and-outs have clouded and delayed my journey into living in abundance, and thankfully they've led me to having a strong desire for something big to change. Adrenal fatigue, digestive issues and stress-related illnesses all point to not being grounded and centered, not living from my Source—specifically, accepting beliefs that are not in alignment with our God.

At its worst, I experienced inexplicable exhaustion, and I know many young adults who are simply tired and worn-out by the pressures we've come to accept as normal. And when you look around, many people are in the same boat. We are simply done.

While our society makes important decisions about interventions into other countries, I see the Spirit calling us to an inward intervention into the beliefs we've embraced that do not serve us. As I share three of mine that revolve around resistance, control and negativity, maybe they'll resonate with others. Now that I've begun this work, I can feel my body release the stress, reducing dramatically the headaches and giving me more energy. I'm a firm believer that all our diseases begin with our thoughts and emotions.

I want to hold each thought captive so that when I do speak, and when appropriate, my words and stories can be used as a salve—medicine to all who hear.

**Mennonites were the first** to introduce me to nonresistance, nonviolence and the active work of peacemaking in response to conflict. The concepts were attractive, and I was easily convinced that the gospel convinces us to such an alternative response. I could envision it in historical movements and potentially in a personal assault, but what does nonresistance look like in my daily life? Could it be healing and an answer to our personal or societal ills?

I've begun to understand that our emotions say much more about what's going on all around us, and when undesirable, it's in part because we're attached to an idea or a story. What if we dropped the story and stopped resisting the present moment and let go of our fight for our own way, ideas and expectations? This is the nonresistance I'm committing to. Accepting all things as they are without exception.

As a parent to four young children, I see within me and most parents I know the ragged juggling of personal life, work, home and relationships. While doing self-reflection, I recognized a belief that made my life difficult. Parents have embraced without question one of the most powerful myths I've observed: We can have the outcome we expect for our children, and the way to get there is through planning, order, obedience and control—parent and child doing everything right.

We're so busy checking the boxes and researching the best that we've lost the point, and worse, in the end, our illusion of control is revealed when despite our best intentions, our children choose a path of resistance to us.

**In my effort to find joy and harmony** in the home, I'm committing to releasing my control (i.e. arbitrary rules on family to teach them a lesson, manipulation of resources to get my outcome and my need to please others outside my family at their expense). I'm welcoming trust and acceptance for whatever is present in the moment.

Lastly, I'm done with the incessant need to share personal stories that speak of my lack, my disappointments, my failures, my broken relationships. Is it possible I was a co-creator of the grief I'd experienced and giving it my attention today would only create more of the same? I've committed myself to being careful about what I say about myself and others. I want to hold each thought captive so that when I do speak, and when appropriate, my words and stories can be used as a salve—medicine to all who hear. Today, I'm ready to spin new stories of what is true about who I am and leave the past behind.

The heavy weight we carry begins with how we view this life. Listening to the emotions is a great place to begin awareness. In our honesty, let's ask our Good Shepherd to guide the rest of the way—letting go of the resistance, surrendering the control and transforming the story. TM

# Access and assess

Democratization" of the news is a heavy reality for print journalists. Information and news is now disseminated in seconds on personal blogs, websites and social media. Fewer and fewer people are willing to pay for news to arrive in print in their mailboxes. So what is the role of traditional reporting and editing?

I sometimes think of our roles as editors as curators of the news. We receive far more news releases than we can include in print, and we also sometimes receive releases that we consider inappropriate to print. Consequently, we are aware of the trust our readers put in our ability to *assess* what is important to publish.

But *access* is what the democratization process is bringing to news reporting. It is changing the way people receive information and news. There are fewer and fewer editors screening the information for accuracy, libel and slander before it reaches readers.

In our September issue, Anna Groff published an article describing some of the "edgy" Mennonite blogs and websites that may be of interest to Mennonite Church USA members. But some of the sites carry content that we would not publish in this magazine. One reader objected to the inclusion of several blogs and said, "As the magazine of the denomination, I am concerned that *The Mennonite* would be promoting these blogs" (see page 5).

**Such a criticism implies** that the reader disagreed with our *assess*ment of what to publish, even though anyone with an Internet connection has *access* to those same blogs. It is this access that is changing print reporting. Here is another example:

Barbra Graber, a reader, was angry about Gordon Houser's assessment (in this column) of a new John Howard Yoder book. She first wrote a letter to the editor expressing her anger, then posted a long piece on her Facebook page.

At the same time, I was aware that Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman was planning to form a committee to re-examine the Yoder case. I also arranged to meet Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., to discuss how we could best partner with AMBS in talking about this history. However, within days, Graber's Facebook post went viral. Suddenly there were links to it from other sites. Anyone could have access to the information.

**Fortunately, the AMBS faculty** had done extensive work on how to teach Yoder, and Shenk was able to both blog about that work as well as publish the AMBS faculty statement crafted last year. But I doubt either would now be public without the speed and access of the blogs, websites and social media. The democratization of news and opinion spurred access to the information.

What does this mean for the church when it has official periodicals like this one? Or, to borrow from some of the header at the top of this column, What is the effect of such media and "citizen journalism" on our faith?

Just as is happening in the secular press, news and information about developments in Mennonite Church USA congregations, conferences, agencies and institutions is increasingly spread by individuals through their blogs, Facebook pages and other social media. It is a reality for periodicals like ours, and we use the new media by having our own bloggers, Facebook page and other social media. Our hope is that in these new *access* points you will continue to trust the way we *assess* what is important for the church.

*Everett Thomas is editor of* The Mennonite

## FILM REVIEW

**The Butler** (R) is a highly fictionalized account of Eugene Allen, who served as a butler in the White House during the administrations of eight presidents, from Truman to Reagan. This dramatic yet didactic film serves well those who haven't taken the time to watch such documentaries as *Eyes on the Prize* or *Freedom Riders.* *—Gordon Houser*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Educating All God's Children: What Christians Can—and Should—Do to Improve Public Education for Low-Income Kids** by Nicole Baker Fulgham (Brazos Press, 2013, $17.99) explores "how and why Christians have a collective responsibility to ensure that kids from low-income communities have the same opportunities for educational success that wealthier children experience." This important book looks at the root causes and systemic factors in this achievement gap, which Fulgham calls "a nationwide epidemic," and considers a biblical framework for addressing it.*—gh*

**Personal Jesus: How Popular Music Shapes Our Souls** by Clive Marsh and Vaughan S. Roberts (BakerAcademic, 2012, $22.99) "examines what popular music does *to* people and what people do *with* popular music through the kinds of music they listen to and the way they listen." The authors explore how music is used to make meaning and tap into transcendence. The book takes an academic approach but concludes with some practical consequences for the church and daily living.*—gh*

**A Syllable of Water: Twenty Writers of Faith Reflect on Their Art**, edited by Emilie Griffin (Paraclete Press, 2008, $20), includes essays by 20 members of the Chrysostom Society, published writers who are Christian. It is "a sharing of personal insights into the writer's life and craft, especially as they relate to his or her deepest convictions." This is especially valuable to those wanting to write.*—gh*

*(Continued from page 5)*

Traffic: Unknown

This is not a commercial site. There are no solicitations for any sales. —*Scott Smith, Greensboro, N.C.*

**Not a doctrinal statement**

Having served with the Mennonite Board of Missions in Hokkaido, Japan, for eight years, I was delighted to see Ken Shenk's translation of the confession of faith that the 17 churches recently agreed upon (September). It is precisely the kind of statement that is needed to introduce the essence of Christian commitment, and I am grateful to our Japanese brothers and sisters for this grass-roots statement.

However, the confession is not a statement of "core principles," as the reporter suggests. It is a statement of identity—those committed to Jesus as the true Word of God—not about agreed-upon, disputed theological doctrine. It locates the Bible as the church's book of instruction under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. It defines the church as those who take Jesus seriously—they "listen" and obey.

In a culture that knows Christianity only as a western cultural phenomenon and knows little or nothing of the philosophical and moral assumptions underlying its doctrinal disputes, this kind of an identity statement is far superior to a doctrinal statement.

Whether we in the traditionally Christian cultures approve or not, it is the visible identity and not the doctrinal or moral "principles" that attract people to the church. Where there is a community of hope and healing, of trustworthy relationships and nonviolent respect for others, people are attracted to Jesus as the true word about God.

One could wish that the Mennonite World Conference statement was more oriented in this direction.—*C. Norman Kraus, Harrisonburg, Va.*

**Dialogue's demands, discoveries**

I very much enjoyed reading the article by Leroy Bechler entitled "Dialogue's Demands and Discoveries" (September). I got to know him at Hesston (Kan.) College in the 1940s and was encouraged and stimulated by his ministry in the black churches.

When we began working with James and Rowena Lark in West Fresno, Calif., he gave us more encouragement as we visited Leroy and Irene in the Watts, Calif., area Mennonite Church. Bechler's article reveals well his commitment to working with the black community and integration.—*John Bergey, Hesston, Kan.*

**Name misspelled twice**

Thanks for asking me to participate in "Questions to Women Leaders" (September). When my contributor's copy came, I was surprised to learn that I now have two new names: "Marsha" Yoder-Schrock in the Table of Contents and "Martha" Yoder-Schrock on page 17. I'm certain that our emails and the article I submitted have the name "Marcia" Yoder-Schrock, which is my given name and the one I prefer.

I make these kinds of errors in church bulletins from time to time, and I always appreciate when people call them to my attention so I do not repeat them. Hopefully, calling attention to this will ensure more careful editing before other people's names go to print. "Spell checkers" don't catch everything.—*Marcia Yoder-Schrock, Donnellson, Iowa*

**Form panel for victims**

Forgiveness is beautifully—almost poetically and correctly—analyzed, described and encouraged by the column from Patricia Shelly, moderator-elect of the Mennonite Church USA (Leadership, September). The editors appropriately placed the Shelly article before the news analysis on page 44, "Unfinished Business with John Howard Yoder." May we look at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary faculty statement through forgiveness-colored glasses and not as an attempt to prosecute and control academia.

Hoping for forgiveness, however, may I not deny the possible feelings and emotions of some. If the difficulties are as extreme as alleged, let us focus on healing so that forgiveness may come for all.

Could not the church establish a panel to provide on an anonymous, voluntary basis help needed by women hurt in the past by men in leadership and hurting now? The panel could receive requests, study circumstances and recommend group or professional help to heal. Such a panel could be led by known experts such as David Augsburger or Howard Zehr and include an objective and independent church person, a mental health professional, women representation for sure, a lawyer/conciliator and a secular civil rights advocate. The church could provide the funding for recommended care.

All of us can work to eliminate sexism and its potential consequences from our hearts and actions.—*Caryl M. Guth, Slidell, La.*

**Use subscript, not superscript**

I appreciated Danile Martens' column about loving the world God so loved (August). I would agree that Mennonites have much to offer. We do it in small ways, and I hope we can find greater ways to address our responsibility for creation.

I also respectfully request that when you use the chemical formula for a compound (as in cee-oh-2) for carbon dioxide, that you make the numeral a subscript, not a superscript. The math and chemistry teacher in me thanks you.—*Elaine Kauffman, Mountain Lake, Minn.*

# God sighting at the school kit blitz

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.*—2 Corinthians 5:18

Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., reached a big goal on Sunday afternoon, Aug. 18. I wish I could have been there to help my home congregation pack 1,562 schools kits for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in a "blitz" (see page 35).

On one level, it was the result of tireless organizing by Dorothy Logan, who first promoted the idea of an MCC School Kit blitz five years ago. Each year since, on "blitz day," Park View's foyer and library area have been transformed into a production room for adults and children. People form assembly lines to fill colorful drawstring bags with the classroom basics—notebooks, pencils, a ruler and an eraser. The kit bags are constructed from fabrics donated to and stitched by members of Mennonite Women.

MCC sends them to any of 15 countries where children cannot afford the basics for school.

This year, the blitz took on an intercultural and international flavor when a number of guest workers helped assemble the kits. The guests—both adults and children—came from three different groups: the Islamic Association of the Shenandoah Valley, the Center for Interfaith Engagement at Eastern Mennonite University, and "Hilos en Comon" (Common Threads). The last group is made up of a Park View member, her neighbor and Hispanic women from the community who meet weekly to work with fabrics and share about their lives. On blitz day, the women displayed their stories through individual wall hangings mounted in the fellowship room.

**The blitz began in midafternoon** with a litany led by pastor Barbara Moyer Lehman and two guests. Cindy Byler, who with Daryl, her husband, served for six years as MCC Country Representatives for Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine, spoke about the children who will be receiving the kits. Amir A. Krami, a visiting Muslim scholar from Iran, offered a prayer of dedication for the day's project before the assembly began. An Iraqi refugee family sponsored by our church joined the assembly line with particular enthusiasm, knowing that some of the bags will likely be sent to Iraq. It took less than an hour to complete all the kits, and then the workers were served ice cream and peaches.

**Because the blitz took** such an unusual turn, I looked for ways God may have worked to bring it about. Organizer Dorothy Logan enthusiastically addressed this question. She told me about a man from the Islamic Association who took photos of their members working in the assembly line. He plans to post the photos on their website and newsletter. He told Dorothy, "We are small at the mosque; to do something like this, we need to 'tag' you."

"It felt like a bundle of trust and bonding dropped straight down from heaven," she said, "when I had just met him for the first time."

Dorothy also saw God at work behind the animated conversations, intermingling and sharing of hospitality. Seeing Muslim and Hispanic women gather around quilt frames with women from Park View to knot blankets to be sent to MCC for displaced people and then eating together felt to her like a drama and/or dream with lines taken from parts of the Sermon on the Mount. It was "definitely a God happening, where God's people worked together in sharing his love."

It felt like a bundle of trust and bonding dropped straight down from heaven.—Dorothy Logan

From yet another perspective, what happened at Park View on Aug. 18 was a result of a patient cultivation of relationships by MCC between Mennonites and the people of Iraq and Iran for well over a decade. At a time when tensions between the United States and Muslim nations are high, this, too, points toward the hand of God, working behind the scenes to reconcile all things to himself through Christ.

Thanks be to God. TM

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# Read it, study it, pray it, live it

Gordon Houser

*Oh, how I love your law!*
*It is my meditation all day long.*
—Psalm 119:97

We come to the Bible, if we come at all, from different perspectives. But do we come with love? Do we let its perspective shape us—individually and as a church? What does shape us? What is our meditation all day long?

The title above comes from the Year of the Bible Network (yearofthebiblenetwork.org), a ministry of Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA that calls people to focus on the Scriptures for a year.

I attended a launch Aug. 1-2 for this focus (see our September issue, page 33) and came away energized, even inspired, by how important it is to let the Scriptures shape us.

**All kinds of influences shape us:** our genes, our families, our education, our socioeconomic level, where we live, the media we absorb. Why would we want an ancient text that includes murders, betrayals, subjection of women and inscrutable laws to shape us?

The Bible helps shape our understanding of God and how God is active in our world. It shows how we may participate in God's story.

The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says, "We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness." As Helmut Harder writes, the Bible answers two basic questions: "What shall we believe? and How shall we live?"

But the Bible is a complex book, really a collection of books (66 in the Protestant version). It includes narrative, poetry, genealogy, parable, letters, apocalyptic, prophecy and more. It is not a simple list of rules to follow.

Instead, the Bible helps shape our understanding of God and how God is active in our world. It shows how we may participate in God's story.

We gradually absorb this story as we read it. And as Malinda Berry writes in the book *A Faith Embracing All Creatures*: "When we read the Bible today, we have the chance to revive ancient teachings by bringing new insights to the table, namely, a renewed vision of God's love and care for us as a community of creatures."

As Loren Johns noted at the August event, our Anabaptist forebears emphasized studying the Bible together, something I don't see many Mennonites doing. This acknowledges the presence of the Spirit among us and how limited our individual perspective is.

**Beyond reading and studying Scripture**, said Patricia Shelly at the same event, we are to ingest and digest God's Word. The Psalmist loves God's "torah" ("law" is an inadequate translation), which means teaching or guidance and applies to all of life, not just so-called religious activities.

Praying the Scriptures is an ancient spiritual practice that involves entering imaginatively into a biblical story and encountering God there. Another helpful practice is "lectio divina," which involves listening to a Scripture several times and noting which word or phrase speaks to us.

We live the Scripture by participating in God's mission of bringing shalom (wholeness, health, reconciliation) to all of creation. We worship God the Creator, who is our ruler, and we proclaim that reign in word and deed.

As we read, study, pray and live the Bible, that magnificent, mysterious text shapes us through the Spirit into a people who reflect God's love in and for the world.—*gh*

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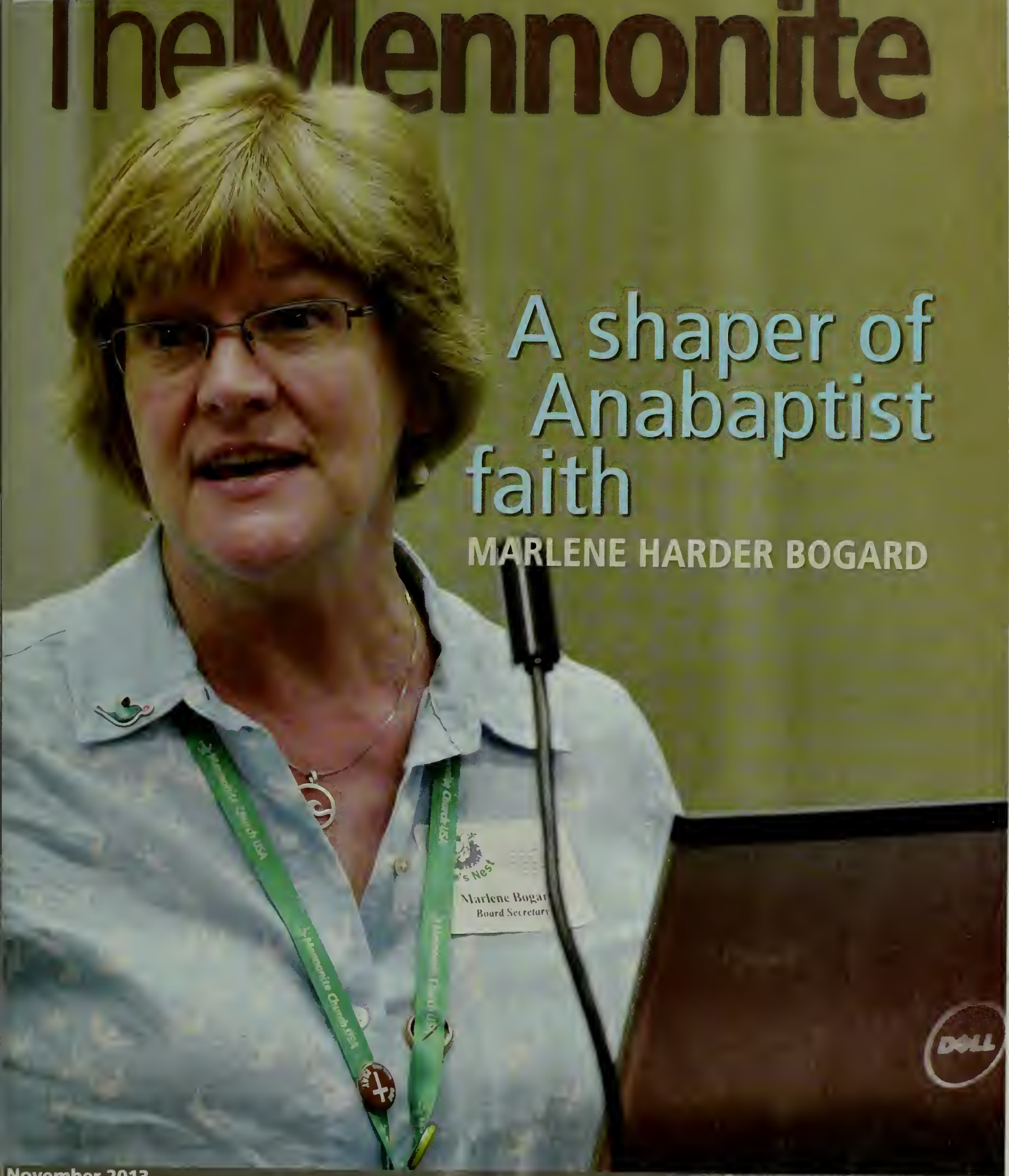
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Marlene Bogar
Board Secretary
Mennonite Church USA

## A shaper of Anabaptist faith

MARLENE HARDER BOGARD

November 2013

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- We are the mission
- God's web of connection
- Amish romance, memoirs, Natives
- Beyond tokenism

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**TheMennonite**
November 2013 | Volume 16, Number 11

*The Mennonite* is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

## Why employers steal wages

I was thrilled to see Everett Thomas addressing wage theft in his September editorial. His article does a fine job of identifying the methods employers use to steal wages, including not paying overtime or the minimum wage and misclassifying employees as subcontractors.

It's important to raise the awareness of this in our churches and among businesspeople. It's equally important to understand *why* wage theft happens at all. Thomas rightly quotes Scripture to remind us of the immorality of stealing (the Bible's abundance on this issue is apparent).

Why, then, do employers steal at all? From my five years of experience in working with victims of wage theft, here are several reasons:

1. Unfair businesses exert power and lobby influence to sway city councils and legislatures.

2. The labor climate in places like Texas is imbalanced toward employers; twisting "the right to work" into "workers have no rights." Labor sectors with little or no union organizing are more susceptible to wage theft.

3. Lack of political will.

4. Silence of good citizens and the religious community, who have not made this issue their own by using their voices to raise consciousness.

5. Oftentimes, but not always, victims of wage theft are recent immigrants and people of color who may be disconnected from or fear the authorities. Employers use the fear of reprisals and false threats (i.e., "If you report this, I'll report you to ICE.") to ensure workers remain silent.

6. Many workers don't know their rights, how employers steal wages, are feared into silence by employers or don't know who is or has access to help.

Thank you for raising our awareness on this and other issues that truly enable and call us to become what we long to be: an externally focused church. Peace.—*Marty Troyer, Houston*

## Need theology of Christian Zionism

The Oct. 6 lesson in MennoMedia's *Adult Bible Study* provided an opportunity to reflect on Christian Zionism, the ideology that supports control by the state of Israel of all the land "from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" and puts the secular government of that state at the center of God's work in the world.

Four years ago, in "Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth," a group of Palestinian Christian leaders called upon the churches of the world to repent of "fundamentalist theological positions" that prop up the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. These leaders asked us "not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed on us."

They asked for our support during their time of need and called on us "to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land."

In response, and as reported to the delegates in Phoenix, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board has encouraged congregations to discuss "the theology of Christian Zionism and its impact on Christian brothers and sisters" in Palestinian territories.

I'm grateful MennoMedia's lesson prompted the discussion. Please help by publishing articles about "the theology of Christian Zionism" in *The Mennonite—Berry Friesen, Lancaster, Pa.*

**Article ignored collaboration**

While glad for an article on Ohio Conference's first ever Youth Leadership Project ("Ohio Youth Participate in Leadership Program," October), I was disappointed that it failed to report the origin of the idea or the full extent of the collaborative nature of the event. It emphasized the denominational portion of the event (Values-Based Leadership Program) while minimizing the conference and conference-based organizations that were centrally involved in the planning and implementation of this two-part event.

Sherah-Leigh Gerber, Ohio Conference's coordinator of volunteers, originated the idea. She gathered a youth minister (Craig Strasbaugh, Kidron Mennonite) and Camp Luz personnel (Andrew Michaels and Lacey Holt) to give shape to the event, inviting Jeremy Kauffman and Bethany Shue Nussbaum to provide the input.

While we value partnering with other portions of the church, we do expect that partnership to be acknowledged in appropriate fashion. Only when all facets of the church are valued for their worth in the body of Christ, will the whole body thrive.—*Tom Kauffman, conference minister, Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA*

**Need new website for dialogue**

Sara Dick's "Tell Me a Story" (Grace and Truth, October ) is helpful. I hope this theme can be pursued with greater depth as we consider what it means to "share the story." It means much more than sharing our personal stories with each other.

Scholars have produced much on what it means for the church to "share the story," and some are worried that the church has gotten too lackadaisical about sharing the story we've been given in the Bible. Scholar Joseph Campbell in *The Power of Myth* (1988) challenges us with how every society in the world has been shaped by some story. Robert N. Bellah wrote about his concern that in America we were losing the power of the story given to us through the biblical word. In *Beyond Belief* (1970), he claims that "behind the civil religion at every point lie the biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth."

Western District's declaration of The Year of the Bible is crucial, recognizing that the church must reclaim its task of telling "the story" if there is to be any hope of the redemption of society and the world.—*Melvin D. Schmidt, Hyattsville, Md.*

**'Father' is God's name**

In his May column, Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, said Jesus taught his disciples to address God as a loving Father, and Ervin invites us also to address God as father.

The most frequently used name for God in the New Testament is "Father." Father is a universally intimate family name. But "father" has not been an intimate name to all. Yet even to those God can be "a father to the fatherless," says David in Psalm 68:5. Jesus was even more intimate by calling God "Abba Father" or "Papa Father" in Mark 14:36. I, too, called my father "Papa." How insulting it would have been had I used a generic greeting like "hello, parent." Try it, it just doesn't fit.

Increasingly we are seeing family devastation when so many homes are absent a father. Homes need a father and mother to thrive. And they thrive best when both honor God.

The Apostle Paul usually opened his letters with, "Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." What an honor to be sons and daughters of God's universal and loving family who are privileged to call God, "Father"!—*Eugene K. Souder, Grottoes, Va.*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Without our planning to do so, two themes emerged in this issue: dismantling racism in the church and care for creation. In fact, Timothy Seidel links the two in the News Analysis.

"Our efforts at caring for creation can themselves become expressions of white privilege," he says (page 44).

In his monthly column, Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman describes an organic food business that takes seriously its stewardship of the earth (page 55).

"I was surprised to learn," Stutzman says, "that in the transportation of produce, the biggest carbon footprint of all is generally left by the customer driving to and from the store to buy groceries."

Three articles in this issue also focus on dismantling racism in the church. On page 36, academician Wilma Bailey talks about white allies during her visit to the Mennonite offices in Elkhart, Ind. On page 43 we report on John Stoesz' riding his recumbent tricycle through 40 counties to bring attention to "land justice" for the Dakota nation. The editorial revisits several claims about progress being made by underrepresented people of color in Mennonite Church USA (page 56).

"We have arrived at a critical mass," Mennonite Church USA moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht says. "Can we now produce systemic changes?"

Mennonite Mission Network staff elected not to publish a mission month theme section this year. But Mission Network executive director Stanley Green addresses a current call for a moratorium on international missions (page 30).

On page 32 we announce the retirement of Everence president and CEO Larry D. Miller and the winners of this year's Journey award from Everence.—*Editor*

## Gerber named new youth leader for MC USA

ELKHART, Ind.—The Leadership Development team of Mennonite Church USA welcomes Rachel S. Gerber as the new half-time denominational minister for youth and young adults. She will begin this assignment Jan. 6, 2014, and work from her home in Bloomington, Ind.

In her new role, Gerber will provide resources for and facilitate connections between youth and young adult groups and ministries across the church. She will join the Youth Ministry Council, Mennonite Camping Association and Mennonite Church USA Convention Planning staff in working on churchwide priorities such as Christian formation and leadership development.

Gerber has a bachelor of arts degree in education from Goshen (Ind.) College and a master of divinity degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va. From 2000 to 2001, she served as interim minister of youth and young adults at College Mennonite Church in Goshen. From 2005 to 2008, she was minister of faith formation at First Mennonite Church in Denver, where she was ordained by Mountain States Mennonite Conference.

Gerber also served as summer program director at Amigo Centre, Sturgis, Mich.; a youth and young adult consultant at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.; worship planner/leader for the Mennonite convention at San José in 2007; and a youth curriculum writer for MennoMedia's *'Gather Round* Sunday school curriculum. Her first book, *Ordinary Miracles*, a memoir on the ministry of parenthood, will be published by Herald Press next spring. *—Mennonite Church USA*

Travis Tice

### 'The lioness is even more dangerous'

Mennonite women from across East Africa converged near Kisumu, Kenya, for a mission conference in early September. About 50 people participated in the conference, including women leaders from Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, two bishops, and several Eastern Mennonite Missions workers. One speaker told a story of a missionary wife in Turkey who led a revival meeting after the police had thrown her husband in jail. As she gave witness to the power of God, the police, horrified, said to each other, "We've locked up the lion, but the lioness is even more dangerous."*—EMM*

## Popular Hispanic program at risk

ELKHART, Ind.—A 25-year old program that has helped more than 1,000 people in its 42-credit-hour program faces financial problems so severe it may need to be scaled back significantly in January 2014.

The Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education (HPLE) is sponsored by the Mennonite Education Agency but cannot continue without increased support, says MEA's executive director, Carlos Romero.

"Over the last four years, including a projected loss (this year), HPLE will have lost a total of $171,600," Romero said on Oct. 8. "This loss is not sustainable for MEA."

Participants in HPLE programs pay tuition. But as with all Mennonite Church USA schools, tuition does not cover all expenses for the program, and the program relies on other revenue sources such as donations. The program has several program tracks, including IBA (Anabaptist Biblical Institute).

"IBA is a very beneficial training program which deserves our financial support," says Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman. "I have seen firsthand how this training has equipped Hispanic church leaders."

HPLE staff members include Rafael Barahona, who works out of MEA's Elkhart office, and Violeta Aquejay, in MEA's Newton, Kan., office.

MEA is sponsoring two events to celebrate HPLE's 25-year anniversary and raise awareness and support: a benefit dinner Oct. 17 in Elkhart and a benefit dinner Nov. 22 in Newton. *—Everett J. Thomas*

## Women's theology conference set for February

ELKHART, Ind.—"All You Need Is Love: Honoring Diversity in Women's Voices in Theology" is the theme of a conference to be held Feb. 20-22, 2014, and sponsored by the Women in Leadership Project (WLP) of Mennonite Church USA, along with Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

"The impetus for this event comes

from the gathering momentum of the WLP and is in keeping with the history of women's conferences among Mennonites," says Hilary J. Scarsella, WLP co-coordinator and associate for transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA.

Scarsella notes that over the last couple of years, interest has grown in the idea of creating a space where Mennonite women could do theology together. About a year ago, staff from Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee U.S. met and decided to support this effort.

An intentionally intergenerational group consisting of pastors, activists, professors and employees of church agencies is leading the planning, so that the gathering will honor the various vocations from which theological work is done. According to the planning group, to "do theology" is to reflect on God in relation to our lives and can take many forms.

Registration opens Nov. 1. Go to www.mennoniteusa.org/women for information.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Photo provided

### Peace festival

Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kan., celebrated its fifth annual Peace Festival Weekend Sept. 14-15. The festival offers alternative, peace-focused events for the congregation and the community, including face-painting (above), sidewalk chalk, a table display of the holy books of four traditions (Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Hindu) and a "school-kit assembly center" where children could put together school kits for the Mennonite Central Committee and watch a DVD presentation about the kits and where they are sent.—*Lois Harder*

## Program for youth helps seminary students confirm call to ministry

ELKHART, Ind.—As two Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary students led a program that encourages high school youth to consider ministry, their own call to ministry grew stronger.

Sara Erb and Eric Vandrick worked with !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth when the participants were on campus July 9–24 for their group experience. !Explore gives high school youth opportunities to study their own theological questions, join in service with others, test gifts for ministry and consider their role in the church. As event pastors, Erb and Vandrick were hosts and guides through the 16 days the participants were together.

Erb had been a participant in !Explore, so her return to the program as a leader gave her a new opportunity to consider her own questions.

During the campus segment of the program, AMBS faculty work with the youth as they explore their theological questions, but the event pastors also teach some sessions. Vandrick focused his teaching on the importance of being connected to the area where each person lives and on caring for and valuing creation.—*AMBS*

## U.S. Poet Laureate has maternal tie to Bluffton

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Fifty years after her mother, Gwendolyn Turnbough, finished her one year at then Bluffton College, Natasha Trethewey, the current Poet Laureate of the United States, spoke "On Poetry and History" in the Bluffton University's annual Keeney Peace Lecture.

Telling Turnbough's story as part of an Oct. 1 forum was Hannah Johnson, a junior from Goshen, Ind., and one of six students who assisted Perry Bush, a professor of history, in relating a mixed history of race and ethnicity at Bluffton.

From 1946 to 1976, Johnson said, Gulfport, Miss., was the site of a Mennonite Voluntary Service unit that built relationships between whites and blacks through involvement in community projects and religious programs.

In the late 1950s and early '60s, she said, the General Conference Mennonite Church and its colleges—including Bluffton—made it possible for 10 African-American students from Gulfport to attend church colleges.

Two of those students came to Bluffton—Turnbough and Milton Lee, a 1960 graduate who went on to become a doctor in California.

She later married a white Canadian, Eric Trethewey, in Ohio—interracial marriages weren't legal in many southern states—and settled in Gulfport, where they had Natasha.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning *Native Guard* is among the poetry collections by Trethewey, who was appointed U.S. Poet Laureate in June 2012.

Her visit is part of a year-long Bluffton focus on race and ethnicity in America.—*Bluffton University*

## Bethel's new student numbers up for 2013

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Bethel College enrollment is up slightly from fall 2012, but an even more important figure is the significantly higher number of new students (first-time freshmen and transfers).

"The class of 2017 is the largest class in recent memory," says Todd Moore, vice president for admissions. "It has eclipsed the size of any class since the turn of the century."

Bethel's overall enrollment for fall 2013 is 482. First-time freshmen come from 18 states and number 123. The transfer students come from 15 states and number 74.

There are two additional students from Germany, from the Bergische Universität in Wuppertal, as part of the exchange program that has been in place since 1951.—*Bethel College*

# The rule of love

**Ron Adams** is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

My brother Jim was a fine human being. Full of joy and mischief. He was always up for an adventure. Everyone loved Jim, and he loved everyone. I miss him.

In 1989, at age 30, Jim ended his life. He'd been fighting depression for several years. He was on medication and in therapy. But none of that kept him alive.

After learning of Jim's death, I flew to Texas to be with my family. My brother David collected me from the airport. He told me there was something I needed to know. My brother Jim was gay.

Of all us kids, Jim was the most devoutly Christian. In his final note, he told us that all he'd ever wanted to do was serve the Lord. He also said that it was impossible for him to do that because of who he was.

To be clear, what killed my brother was his depression, not his sexual orientation. As is true of the broader population, most gay folks are in good mental health. There is no inherent connection between Jim's orientation and his depression. But there is a connection between his theology and his death.

> The story of Jesus reveals that the sin we religious folks are most prone to is that of placing the rule of law over the rule of love.

**The theology Jim and I grew up with** was based on a literalistic reading of the Bible. There was no room for nuance or interpretation. The Bible said what it said. Looking back, I can fairly say that we worshiped the Bible. The Bible was our God. This meant that if the Bible appeared to condemn something or someone, then God condemned them, too.

Jim grew up being told by his church that he was damned. Not because he was especially unfaithful or had committed an unpardonable sin. He was damned because of who he was born to be. A gay man.

Jim internalized that theology and the feelings of condemnation and self-loathing it produced. Add that to a chronic depression and the result was lethal.

What troubles me most about our current debate about sexuality is how abstract we make it. We talk about it as if it were an issue or a theological debating point. Like the Pharisees, we talk as if the only thing at stake is our theological purity. In the process, we dehumanize our LGBT sisters and brothers. They are the others who must be purged if we are to remain good and righteous Christians.

My brother Jim was no abstraction. He was not an issue to be debated. He was a sweet, gentle and loving young man.

Denominational guidelines exist regarding the conduct of pastors. Those guidelines include consequences for pastors who bless Jesus-followers whose partners are of the same sex. I don't expect that to change anytime soon.

But speaking as a pastor, if I am asked to choose between adhering to those guidelines and welcoming and blessing someone, anyone, seeking to follow Jesus, I will welcome and bless.

**The story of Jesus** reveals that the sin we religious folks are most prone to is that of placing the rule of law over the rule of love. In doing so, we put ourselves at odds with the Jesus we claim to serve, the one who ate with those whom good religious folk considered unclean, unworthy and unwelcome. Our quest for theological purity condemns us.

Speaking as a brother, I wonder what might have been had Jim belonged to a church that told him that he was a beloved child of God, made in God's image and fully welcome and blessed. I wonder what might have been had some pastor told Jim that his orientation was a gift from God to be celebrated and that his partner was welcome in worship, too. I wonder what might have been had Jim understood himself to be someone capable of serving God without rejecting who he knew himself to be.

I'll never know. None of that happened. The church failed Jim. It didn't kill him. But neither did it offer him love and welcome when he needed both. TM

# What and how we sing matters

I was almost 40 years old before I learned to clap my hands—in church, that is. I'm sure I learned "patty-cake" as an infant, and I had no problem applauding at sport events or concerts. But for much of my young adult life I found it almost impossible to participate when asked to clap along with the music of a worship service. I could use my body to shake hands, sing, stand or even kneel to pray. Clapping, however, seemed like an excessive display of public piety, best left to Pentecostals or those who wore their faith on their emotional sleeve. It didn't help that I felt rhythmically challenged—keeping a beat while singing seemed to require more concentration than I was able to muster.

All that changed when our family spent a year in Costa Rica, where we worshipped every Sunday with the Comunidad Cristiana del Nuevo Pacto, a Mennonite church in the San José neighborhood of Moravia. Like many—perhaps most—Mennonite churches outside North America, the worship service at Nuevo Pacto began with a long period of singing, accompanied by guitars, drums and an electric organ. With the words projected onto a screen, the music started softly and reflectively, before slowly building to a crescendo of full-throated singing, vigorous clapping, raised hands and lots of physical movement. Sometimes the singing would dissolve into a loud chorus of spontaneous spoken prayers that included speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances.

**After the first service**, we returned home wide-eyed, wondering how we were going to survive. Yet the people at Nuevo Pacto were kind to us, the sermons were interesting and I was moved by the vulnerability people expressed in their sharing, confessions and prayers and by their evident love for each other. Over time, the opening hour of expressive music seemed less alienating, and I gradually joined in the clapping. By the end of the year I was no more rhythmically adept, but I had shed most of my self-conscious inhibitions about praise music and found myself actually looking forward to that part of the service. Since then I have experienced similar forms of singing while worshipping in Amharic, Swahili, Indonesian and many other Spanish settings.

James R. Krabill, senior executive for global ministries at Mennonite Mission Network, has recently edited a remarkable collection of essays and resources called *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library, 2013). Among the 150 contributions to this rich volume is an essay by Mary Oyer, longtime professor of music at Goshen (Ind.) College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and perhaps the single most influential person in shaping the musical traditions of North American Mennonites during the second half of the 20th century. In the essay (see our June issue, page 22), Oyer describes her experience studying African music and arts during a sabbatical leave in 1972. Initially, the new tonalities, repetitive patterns and rhythmic intensity of the music she encountered in East Africa were alien to her training as a classical musician. Yet as she listened more carefully, participated in worship and learned to play several new instruments, Oyer experienced a kind of conversion—a new appreciation for the coherence and beauty of alternative forms of worship, especially among East African Mennonites who were creatively adapting hymns inherited from missionaries to align with their own cultural musical heritage.

In the decades since then, Mennonite hymnody in North America has been deeply enriched by her pioneering work. Along with Ken Nafziger and many others, Oyer has tirelessly encouraged Mennonite congregations in North America to expand their musical repertoire with songs from the global church. Thus, in 1992, *Hymnal: A Worship Book* incorporated several dozen such hymns, and we have come to learn many more in the subsequent hymnals, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*.

**What and how we sing matters.** Our theology is shaped at least as much by music as it is by sermons. Yet we sometimes forget that forms of worship are always living and dynamic. Indeed, the four-part harmony so central to the identity of many North American Mennonites today was once denounced as a prideful innovation.

I am grateful to our friends at Comunidad Cristiana del Nuevo Pacto who taught me that clapping could be a form of worship. And I am even more grateful to Mary Oyer, who spent a lifetime expanding our musical horizons to include new forms of worship beyond the familiar. Both are hints of the eschatological vision of St. John of a coming day when all nations, tribes and peoples will gather around the throne of God to lift their voices of praise (Revelation 7). Maranatha. TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Our theology is shaped at least as much by music as it is by sermons.

# Hundreds of close calls we never knew about

Back in the late 1970s and '80s, I was involved in the antinuclear weapons movement. We tried to warn people about the danger of so many nuclear weapons—more than 50,000. One was too many, many of us felt, but we also tried to argue with such logic as, Why do we need to be able to blow up the world 50 times over? We also warned people about the risk of accidents and an inadvertent error leading to a suicidal nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Little did we know that we were actually understating the danger. Little did we know how many times we came dangerously close to a nuclear war.

Now, with the publication of Eric Schlosser's book *Command and Control* (Penguin, 2013), we know much more about that history.

Louis Menand reviews the book in the Sept. 30 issue of *The New Yorker*. He includes summaries of some of the stories Scholler tells. For example, on Jan. 25, 1995, more than four years after the end of the Cold War, Russian leader Boris Yeltsin received news at 9:28 a.m. Moscow time that "a missile had been launched four minutes earlier from the vicinity of the Norwegian Sea, and that it appeared to be headed toward Moscow." Yeltsin had the option of launching an immediate nuclear strike against targets around the world. He had 4,700 nuclear warheads ready to go.

It turned out the "missile" was a weather rocket launched from Norway to study the aurora borealis. "The Norwegians had, in fact, notified the Russians several weeks in advance of the launch," Menand writes, but "whoever received the notice didn't grasp the implications or simply forgot to forward it to military authorities."

This was one of hundreds of incidents after 1945 when "accident, miscommunication, human error, mechanical malfunction or some combination of glitches nearly resulted in the detonation of nuclear weapons."

Menand includes other stories. In 1958, "a B-47 bomber carrying a Mark 36 hydrogen bomb, one of the most powerful weapons in the American arsenal, caught fire while taxiing on a runway at an airbase in Morocco." Fortunately, or luckily, and the word must be repeated many times, the explosives in the warhead did not detonate.

Only six weeks later, another Mark 6 landed in the back yard of a house in Mars Bluff, S.C. "It had fallen when a crewman had mistakenly grabbed the manual bomb-release lever." Fortunately (there's that word again), the nuclear core had not been inserted. The bomb left a 35-foot crater, killed a lot of chickens and sent family members to the hospital.

One study discovered that "between 1950 and 1968 at least 1,200 nuclear weapons had been involved in 'significant' accidents." Even the bomb dropped on Nagasaki was a mile off target (and killed 40,000 people).

Perhaps the most harrowing incident occurred in 1980 at a Titan II missile silo in Arkansas, when a worker dropped a socket into the silo and left a hole in the missile.

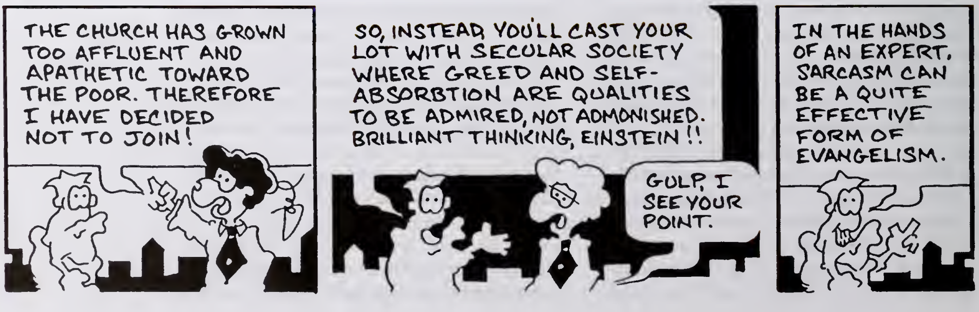
The explosive force of a Titan II was three times the force of all the bombs dropped in World War II, including the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. If detonated, it would have wiped out most of the state of Arkansas.

Schlosser also discusses at length the insane strategy of the Cold War powers, which called for full-scale nuclear war in response to any attack. A general tells Schlosser that "we escaped the Cold War without a nuclear holocaust by some combination of skill, luck and divine intervention, and I suspect the latter in greatest proportion." Indeed.

Today many smaller powers also have nuclear weapons, and the possibility of their use, by design or accident, is high.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


THE CHURCH HAS GROWN TOO AFFLUENT AND APATHETIC TOWARD THE POOR. THEREFORE I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO JOIN!
SO, INSTEAD YOU'LL CAST YOUR LOT WITH SECULAR SOCIETY WHERE GREED AND SELF-ABSORBTION ARE QUALITIES TO BE ADMIRED, NOT ADMONISHED. BRILLIANT THINKING, EINSTEIN!!
GULP, I SEE YOUR POINT.
IN THE HANDS OF AN EXPERT, SARCASM CAN BE A QUITE EFFECTIVE FORM OF EVANGELISM.

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “Thank God the research didn’t find that novels increased tooth decay or blocked up your arteries.”

—Novelist Louise Erdrich on studies finding that after reading literary fiction people performed better on tests measuring empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence

## Cash royalties from fracking bring temptation to Amish

In parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania, Amish communities are debating a new temptation—the large cash royalties that can come with the boom in oil and gas drilling.

In some ways, Amish attitudes toward hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, are as different from the outside world as their clothes and traditions. Instead of worries about air and water pollution, they’re focusing on people’s souls.

The stakes can be huge. While oil and gas wells have been common in parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania for more than 100 years, they typically didn’t lead to huge payments to landowners. But over the past few years, hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has led to bigger wells that can generate hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of dollars in royalties for a property holder.

During fracking, large volumes of water, along with sand and hazardous chemicals, are injected underground to break rock apart and free the oil and gas. The process has led to a boom in energy production in many states, but also concerns about air and water pollution.

Historian Donald B. Kraybill says that rules vary widely among Amish communities but that there is “considerable concern” among church leaders that drilling money could create huge income disparities within the same community.—*Associated Press*

**65**

Percentage of Americans who support using drones to strike suspected terrorists on foreign soil.

**25**

Percentage of Americans who support using drones to strike suspected terrorists on domestic soil.

**23**

Percentage of Americans who support using drones to issue speeding tickets.

—*The Atlantic*

## Workers unite

Henry Blodget, former equity research analyst, has had an antipathy toward unions. He has thought that unions led to a sense of entitlement, decreased corporate competitiveness and ultimately led to the transfer of jobs overseas. We now have a larger problem, Blodget says. While corporate profits are at an all-time high, wages as a percent of the economy are at an all-time low. Companies are so obsessed by short-term profits that they’re paying employees less and not investing in future growth, keeping the economy from recovery. Robust labor unions are needed again to increase workers’ compensation. Corporations won’t voluntarily do it.—*Christian Century*

## First deaf Bible may come from Japan

Translators in Japan are trying to create the world’s first complete sign-language Bible for the deaf. The ViBi project, which uses video-recorded Scriptures, has translated 13 of the Bible’s 66 books since starting in the early 1990s. The Japan Deaf Evangel Mission believes it can complete the remaining 53 books by 2023, given enough financial support.—*Christianity Today*

## Israelis violate international law

According to Defense for Children International, an independent nongovernmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, since the beginning of this year arrests of Palestinian children by the Israeli authorities have increased by 17 percent. Human rights groups say that particularly in Hebron violations of international law with regard to the detentions and arrest of children happen on a daily basis.—*Christian Peacemaker Teams*

## Al-Jazeera America unbiased

A new study of cable news coverage of the Syria crisis found that Al-Jazeera America covered the fast-moving story of President Obama’s threat to strike the civil war-torn nation much the way its cable rivals did. The report, released Sept. 16 by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, covers the period from Aug. 26, when Secretary of State John Kerry accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons, until Aug. 31, when Obama said he would seek congressional approval for his plans to punish the forces of Syrian leader Bashar Assad.—*Religion News Service*

**450**

Approximate number of the world’s living languages that have fewer than 10 native speakers alive.

—*Spirituality & Health*

### Numbers to ponder

- Percentage of discretionary spending devoted to defense in President Obama’s proposed 2014 budget: **57**
- Percentage devoted to education: **6**
- Rank of the United States, out of 29 developed countries, in overall child well-being: **26**
- Rank of Greece: **25**
- Rank of Lithuania: **27**

—*Yes! Magazine*

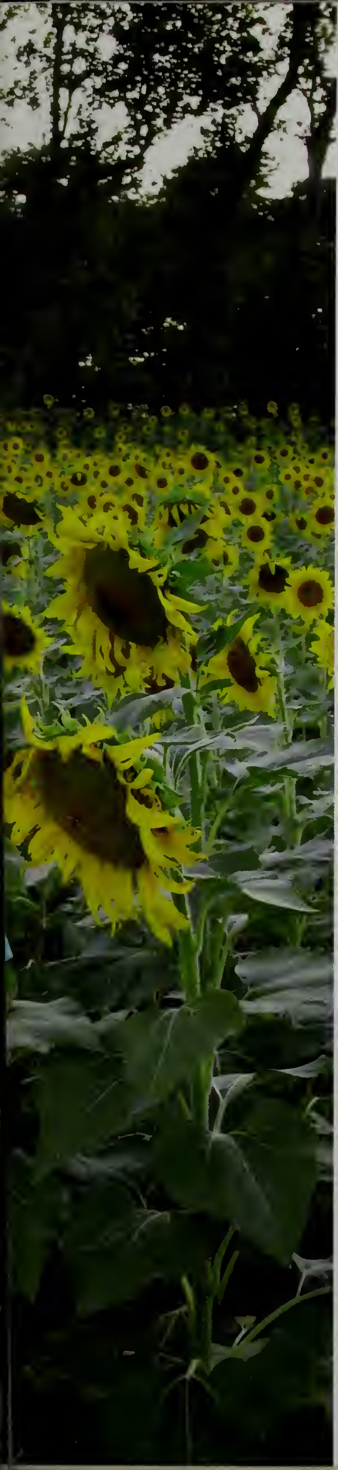
**Marlene Harder Bogard came to own her faith and now shares it with others.**

# A shaper of Anabaptist faith

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

While growing up in Mountain Lake, Minn., Marlene Harder Bogard, minister of Christian formation for Western District Conference (WDC), had everything a young person needed to form a strong Christian identity—a strong home, a strong church and strong role models. Except there was one catch: She had not yet owned the faith for herself.

Marlene Bogard in a field of Kansas sunflowers.
Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson



So when her peers at Bethel Mennonite Church joined the catechism class leading to baptism, the 16-year-old declined to participate, she said during an August interview. As the class studied the Anabaptist faith, the fun-loving teenager who was often in the center of things was absent.

Instead, Marlene, the daughter of the late Clarence and Irma (Fast) Harder, visited other churches or sat alone at the lake on the outskirts of the small rural community settled by her German Mennonite ancestors. As she peered into the sunlight dancing off the lake, she reflected about what it meant to be a Christ follower in her own way, rather than joining the crowd.

In the midst of her dilemma, the Jesus movement of the 1970s came to town. She breathed in some of the air of the evangelical and free-spirited movement. And the soul of the vivacious teenager expanded with hope that she could connect with Christianity in ways she could name for herself.

"I stepped away from the pressure of the 'cattle chute' mentality," said Marlene, who lives in rural Newton with her pastor husband, Michael Bogard. "I felt that just because one was 16 years old one should not be expected to take catechism. I felt that everyone's faith journey was unique and different, and I wanted to own faith for myself rather simply being part of the group."

But a fork in the road came the night of her junior prom. She was getting ready to go to a party when she had a conversation with a caring Youth for Christ leader that became a turnaround experience for her. ▶

The teenager who once questioned the Anabaptist tenets of faith is the same woman who is now helping solidify those tenets through resources and education.

Marlene Bogard leading story hour at the Western District Library. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

"The next day was Sunday, when the members of catechism class were to be baptized," Marlene said. "Because of the conversation the day before and my change of heart, I called up my pastor, the late Walter Gering, at 6 a.m. I told him my story and asked if I could be baptized with the class after all."

He said yes. And Marlene, who for months had been watching the waves wash the shoreline, was sprinkled with the baptismal waters that symbolized rebirth. She stood before the 400-member congregation to give testimony to her commitment to Christ.

That moment was only one of many in the next several decades in which she was called publically to share faith with God's people. Eventually, Marlene became part-time WDC Library director in 1990 and full-time WDC minister of Christian formation in 2002. She was ordained in April 2007.

Today, Marlene directs the WDC Library in North Newton, Kan., where she selects and manages the 12,000-book-and-DVD collection. The library provides faith-based resources for all ages across WDC, South Central Conference and Central Plains Mennonite Conference. She also provides workshops and seminars on topics ranging from engaging Christian formation in congregations to hospitality to developing policies for keeping children safe.

My mother had to find her livelihood and raise us by herself in the 1960s. That was not an easy task.—Marlene Harder Bogard

She plans WDC annual assemblies and convenes conferences such as the launch of WDC's Year of the Bible (YOB). Mennonite Church USA has taken notice of her regional commitment to cutting-edge and creative resourcing with YOB. As a result, she is partnering with Terry Shue, Mennonite Church USA's director of leadership development, to provide YOB materials for the denomination through the development of the website yearofthebiblenetwork.org.

**Pathway to vocation has detours**

Ironically, the teenager who once questioned the Anabaptist tenets of faith is the same woman who is now helping solidify those tenets through resources and education. But her path to her current vocation had its detours.

When she was 7, her father, Clarence, owner of the town's Standard Oil Station, died suddenly, leaving Marlene, her mother, Irma, and her 10-year-old sister, Becky, to carry on.

"I experienced a very carefree childhood until my father died," Marlene said. "That event set into motion a whole host of changes in my childhood and youth experience. My mother had to find her livelihood and raise us by herself in the 1960s. That was not an easy task."

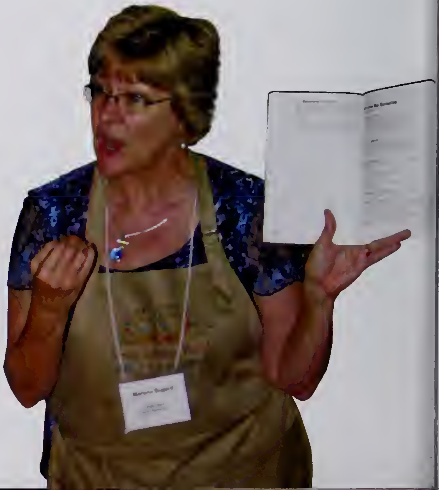
Marlene said her mother, who died at 95 in May, was a pillar of the church and community.

"I think about her every day and what she modeled for us," Marlene said. "She had an entrepreneurial spirit and helped build a new public library and the community's Heritage House Museum. I see myself trying to fit into some of the same roles she had, and I find a lot of satisfaction in following in her footsteps."

Marlene's parents were part of a mosaic of German Mennonites who immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1874 and helped establish Mountain Lake. A small extended family—in tandem with a nurturing church family—rooted Marlene in the love of God and others in a rural farming community (population 1,900).

"My faith formation as a child was very steady," she said. "I loved to go to vacation Bible school and read the stories in the Herald Press booklets. We lived a half block from the church, and I went there all the time."

Anchors from her Mennonite faith heritage—including peace and justice, community, simplicity and discipleship—ultimately steadied Marlene after her windblown adolescent identity crisis. But it would still take a few more years before she reached the "harbor" of the Anabaptist world.



Marlene Bogard at the launch of Year of the Bible in August. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Marlene Bogard leads a seminar at Phoenix 2013. Photo by Ken Krehbiel

Rather than hoping people would come to the library to use our resources, Marlene took those resources into the congregations.—Dorothy Nickel Friesen

"After I was baptized, I got involved in the Jesus movement," she said. "I participated in parades where we shouted, 'I am a fool for Jesus—whose fool are you?' This involvement propelled me into a different mind-set, and for me it became all about being a Christian first, then a Mennonite."

She went to Baptist-affiliated Bethel College in St. Paul, Minn., to set herself apart from her Mennonite upbringing, she said. But after a couple of years, she felt something was missing and realized it was the Anabaptist emphasis on peace and discipleship.

So after she and Mike met at Bethel and became engaged, they decided to live out an Anabaptist Mennonite expression of Christianity when they married after graduation in 1977. Soon after the wedding, they were hired as co-directors of Swan Lake Christian Camp in South Dakota.

In 1979, they moved to Elkhart, Ind., where Mike pursued seminary studies at what is now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. At that point, however, Marlene—with a college major in anthropology and linguistics—had no inkling of her own ministerial call.

"I never dreamed of going to seminary," she said. "No one tapped me [on the shoulder] and said I should take a class, so I didn't. I put Mike through school by working in a library and a greenhouse and began having babies. We had a tight budget and brought carrots to potluck, where we were so excited to have meat."

Their first son, Ben, 32, was born in Goshen, Ind., and their other son, Josh, 30, was born in Freeman, S.D., where the couple moved in 1982 so that Mike could pursue several pastoral callings. Marlene became a librarian at Freeman Public Library and also worked at some other jobs.

### A geographic change brings vocation change

In 1990, they moved to Newton, Kan., when Mike became WDC youth pastor. Marlene became part-time WDC Library director. The shoulder tapping began when Dorothy Nickel Friesen became WDC conference minister in 2002. Marlene's role during Friesen's tenure (through 2010) expanded into what eventually was titled minister of Christian formation. During this decade, Marlene earned a master's degree in Christian ministry and was ordained.

"Even though we both grew up in Mountain Lake, she was off my radar until I moved to Kansas to become WDC conference minister," Friesen said during a Sept. 16 interview. "It didn't take me long to see what a treasure I had. I saw a multitude of gifts in her that were not being used, and those were the gifts I felt the church was calling for. In Marlene, we already had that person in place.

"So we shifted her role into one of teaching and providing workshops, seminars and conferences. Rather than hoping people would come to the library to use our resources, Marlene took those resources into the congregations."

WDC's Resource Commission helps direct Marlene in her role. In an early September interview, Jeff Koller, commission chair, said Marlene's joyful spirit and people skills enhance her many other gifts.

"Marlene knows how to interject fun at appropriate times but is able to flip instantly into a more serious mode when the deeper issues call for that," he said. "She also helps everyone else to have a good time by interjecting humor and fun into any setting.

"And when there is controversy, she is usually able, without compromising her own beliefs, to stay neutral and respectful and to relate with everyone."

### Nurturing the church of today

Part of what brings the most joy to Marlene is her interaction with children and younger people, she said. That includes conducting library story hour for preschoolers, teaching youth ministry classes at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., engaging young adults in the YOB and mentoring developing leaders.

"There is no need to be fearful about the church's future," she said. "As I listen to young adults talk about their faith and their questions, I hear how eager they are to become something more for God. We often say that young adults are the future of the church. They are the church right now."

From left: Ben Bogard and wife, Jennifer Sonntag, Marlene, Mike and son Josh.
Photo provided

She added: "When we isolate ourselves from other generations, we fall short of what God intended. When we engage in these multigenerational relationships, we learn not only about history but also what may be our future. We learn about our current realities and using faith to maneuver those realities."

I want to help our denomination let go of things it once held dear in order that something new can emerge.—Marlene Harder Bogard

One of Marlene's mentees was Katherine Goerzen, who was ordained in October 2011 and is associate pastor at Grace Hill Mennonite Church near Whitewater, Kan.

"I loved Marlene's energy and the joy that radiated from her," Goerzen said during an early September interview. "It was empowering for me to relate to her and to see how gifted women leaders like her bring authority to their position.

"And now, since I live a block away from the Resource Library, I weekly bring my 17-month-old daughter to check out books. Marlene often gets down on the floor to play with her."

**Bogard's "bucket list" is long**

Marlene said these interactions are double gifts for her, given the geographical distance that lies between her and her sons, who live in the Pacific Northwest. Social networks and smart phones help them stay connected, but face-to-face conversations happen only a couple times each year. Soon the Bogards expect to hold their first grandchild, born to their son, Ben, and his wife, Jen. The addition of a new generation sparks Marlene's passion for preserving family bonds.

"I dream of writing family history tales for my children and grandchildren," she said. "As our children move out of our communities, faith and family and history are more difficult to transfer when you don't have those weekly come-over-for-soup moments."

The challenges of fostering family bonds from afar figure deeply into her future, as do other challenges. At 58, Marlene said she is running out of time to do all the things she cares about. Her list is long.

"I want to help our denomination let go of things it once held dear in order that something new can emerge," she said. "Sometimes those things exist side by side, but more often than not, we have to choose between letting go and moving forward. I see that as a real dilemma for the Mennonite church right now.

"I want to find more time to dream and reflect and have silence like I did on those Sunday mornings at the lake when I was 16. My mind gets so cluttered with media and noise and opportunities that it is hard to hear God's voice."

Marlene said that even though she is not a "Jesus freak" anymore, she wants to better fulfill her desire to follow Jesus in lifestyle choices. "Mike and I want our lifestyle to represent our care for each other and our care for the Earth," she said. This includes nurturing their five acres of land with its garden and fruit trees.

It also means harvesting more of the blessings of working with people. "I become alive when I am with people, and I count it a blessing to have gotten to know hundreds of people through the years," she said. "What is most important to me is that I have been a positive influence in someone's life and have encouraged someone. I really feel like my job is the best calling I could have."

That is, until it comes time for her second career.

The former Campfire Girl who swam in cold lakes said she dreams of becoming a park ranger. "That would allow me to be immersed with people in nature," she said. "I could be a storyteller, a guide, a nurturer, a caretaker. I am all those things now, but I am stuck in an office without a window. I get really cranky when I don't get my green fix."

*Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of* Forever Family.

# QUESTIONS TO women leaders

**Carolyn Holderread Heggen** has served on the boards of Hesston (Kan.) College, Mennonite Board of Missions and Mennonite Women. At Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church she was a pastoral elder. At Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church she was congregational chair and discernment minister. She did writing and teaching for the church on issues of pastoral boundaries and prevention of and healing from sexual abuse and domestic violence. She helped design the Sister Care program and manual and co-led these workshops here and internationally.

Jesus' tender regard and loving compassion for women, children and others without social power or respect re-energizes me and reminds me that healing work is godly work.—Carolyn Holderread Heggen

**Did you have a woman leader as mentor? How did she help you?**
Lois Yake Kenagy took special interest in me when I was a young adult. Although we didn't call it a mentoring relationship then, that is the role she has played in my life. At a time when the church was debating the appropriateness of women being pastors or teaching men, Lois urged me to get a Ph.D. in theology "because we need women helping us interpret the Bible." Her encouragement helped me believe I had something to offer the church and a voice that needed to be heard.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a church leader?**
There are several young women in the United States and abroad with whom I have a mentoring relationship.

**If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?**
Young Mennonite women in North America today have more encouragement and opportunity to use their leadership gifts in the church, I find. They also have more role models of women ministers and leaders of our church institutions. However, they still have to discern their gifts and follow their call amid the sometimes confusing dictates of biblical injunctions and diverse understandings of appropriate roles for Christian women and family responsibilities.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**
When called to positions of leadership that would have required a move for our family, there were subtle and not so subtle messages to me that it would be inappropriate and unbiblical to ask my husband to give up his job so that I could follow the call of God and the church. One church leader and friend said, "Giving up what I know you so much want to do and at which you would be so effective may be the most important lesson you ever give the church on gender relations."

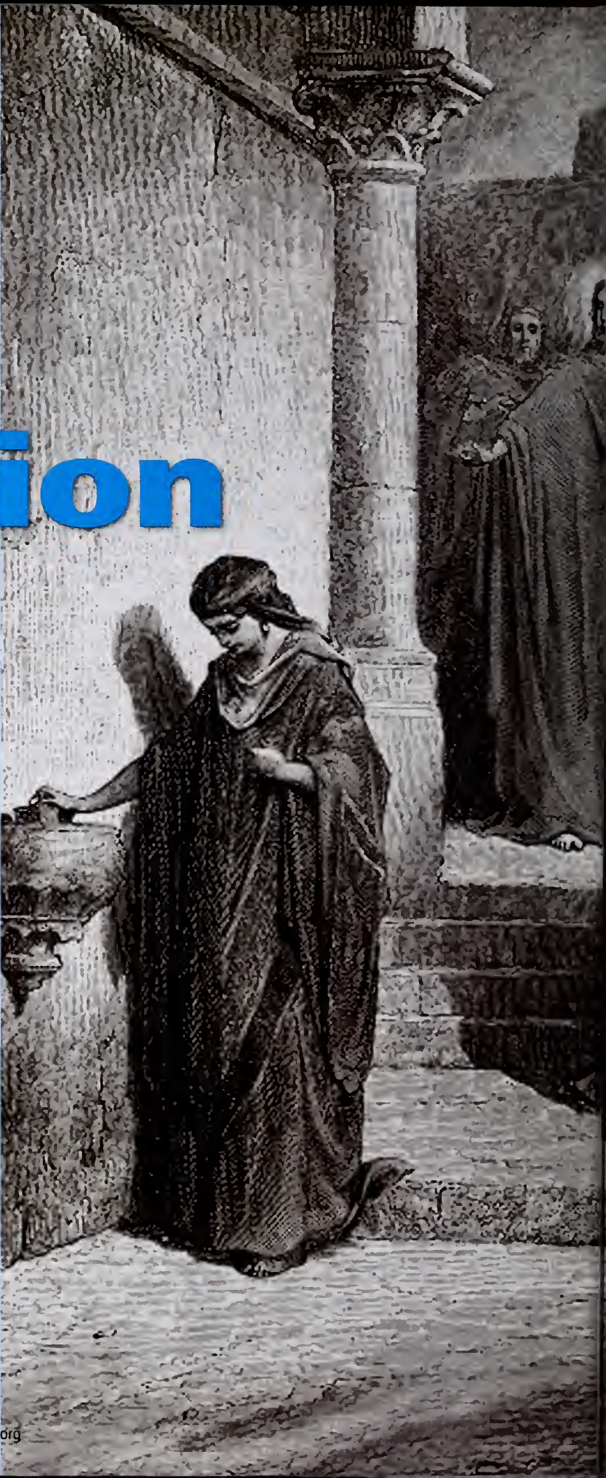
**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**
I have a wise and loving group of friends who sustain me in times of despair, surround me with prayer and practical expressions of love in times of need and have helped me improvise a meaningful life, often around the "edges" of the church. I often reread the Gospels and focus on the way Jesus treated women, children and others without social power or respect. His tender regard and loving compassion for them re-energizes me and reminds me that healing work is godly work.

A reflection on Mark 12:38-44

# We are the mission

by Barry C. Bartel

I am a lawyer, or what's called in the Bible one of the "teachers of the law." Law may be the only profession for which it is socially acceptable for the punch line of the joke to be some form of, "I wish you were dead." Could it be that Mark 12:38-44 is the origin of making lawyer jokes socially acceptable?



"The Widow's Mite," by Gustave Doré www.creationism.org

Most Bible translations label verses 38-40 something like, "Warning Against the Teachers of the Law." And what a warning it is! In fact, this passage and the same story in Luke 20 are the only times in the Bible where Jesus directly proclaims that people will be punished.

Verses 41-44 are often labelled something like, "The Widow's Offering." This is significant because the widow gives her last two coins. But all seven of these verses do go together as one passage. If someone puts two coins in our offering at church, none of us knows if those are their last two coins. In fact, we will assume they are not their last two coins.

So how did Jesus and the others know that the widow had put her last two coins in the offering? They already knew something about this woman. She was not a stranger but was well known. She was one of the widows described in the previous verses, whose house the teachers of the law had "devoured."

By giving those last two coins, this widow exposed the injustice of what the teachers of the law had done.

**The widow's offering underscores** the first teaching of this passage: Actions matter. The teachers of the law acted in a way that was accepted in their culture but unacceptable to Jesus. They had power and used it to take the widow's house and almost everything the widow owned. Jesus said that because of their actions, they deserved to be punished.

But the teachers of the law did not take those last two coins. The widow voluntarily placed them in the treasury. Jesus seems to praise the widow for giving out of her poverty. It seems Jesus is accepting her poverty. We might describe the widow as "resilient."

Let me link this to my experience in Haiti. The Haitian people have experienced enormous hardship, but they have incredible pride. Africans were brought to Haiti as slaves, and they gained their freedom and independence in 1804, even before slavery was abolished in the United States. But generations of dictators, poverty and hurricanes made it seem even more cruel when the earthquake in January 2010 killed tens of thousands of people. Many Haitians have been reduced often to their last two coins, as was the widow in our story. Yet even through it all, the Haitian people are strong. I've been there twice since the earthquake. I know, and many people acknowledge it. Haitians are incredibly resilient.

So it struck me when a friend of mine whose work focuses on Haiti sent me a quote from a Haitian man who had grown tired of being called "resilient." Ilio Durandis wrote this in an email to my friend shortly after the ▶

January 2010 earthquake: "There is nothing sexy about being a resilient people. On the contrary, everything about resiliency connotes misery, exploitation, acceptance, victimization and so on. After 206 years of independence, we would hope to have become a people of progress, determination, success. We must become tired of being resilient. ... I do not wish to live my whole life being resilient."

Couldn't you see that widow who gave her last two coins saying the same thing? If she could speak this morning, wouldn't she say, "I don't want to be known for being resilient. I don't want to be known for being generous out of my poverty, as though my poverty was acceptable. What I did was much more powerful," the widow might say.

When the cloak means something, taking it off to wash another's feet is more significant.

**Until she gave those two coins**, the actions of the teachers of the law were accepted. By giving those last two coins, this widow exposed the injustice of what the teachers of the law had done. That is why all seven of these verses must be read together.

Let's put the widow's offering in a broader context. We are all familiar with the passage in Matthew 5:38-42 (NIV):

*You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*

American theologian Walter Wink provides the best analysis of these verses and shows how Jesus is not suggesting weakness but strength.

Why does Jesus counsel people to turn the other cheek? Because this action robs the other of the power to humiliate. The person who turns the other cheek is saying, in effect, "Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me. I am a human being just like you. Your status does not alter that fact. You cannot demean me."

Likewise, Walter Wink analyzes how handing over your coat or going the second mile transcends the ability of the oppressor to humiliate.

This widow has taken this teaching to a whole new level. The teachers of the law took her house and everything she owned except two coins. They liked to have "the most important seats in the synagogues" and probably watched as people gave their offerings. They had humiliated many, but this widow transcended their ability to humiliate her. She did more than turn the other cheek; she did more than give her coat; she did more than go the second mile. She exposed the injustice of what the teachers of the law had done when she gave her last two coins. And everyone knew it.

**Actions matter.** Jesus could have described what the teachers of the law did and condemned them without focusing on their attitude. But most of the passage focused on their arrogance. They wore long, flowing robes, liked to be greeted with respect and liked the most important seats at the synagogue and places of honor at banquets. Other passages also talk about robes or cloaks or gowns. The Greek word used in Mark 12 is "stole." That is the origin of our English word "stole," which can mean a long robe. "Stole" in English can also be a long band worn traditionally around the neck by bishops and priests and over the left shoulder by deacons. They may look something like the purple hood I wear with an academic robe to represent my law degree.

What can you do when you are dressed like this? You can hope you won't need to go to the bathroom. You can't bend over to tie your shoe. You can't get your keys out of your pocket.

Now imagine several rows of people dressed like this, and imagine their acrobatics when a cell phone goes off in the middle of a prayer. Wearing such a robe, you stand out, and it sets you apart in a group where others aren't dressed the same. Whenever I had to wear this as president [of Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.], I took it off as soon as I could. But the teachers of the law in Mark 12 liked the status of wearing their robes around the synagogue.

The teachers of the law were not the only people who wore robes then. Jesus also wore one. Remember how the woman got close to Jesus to touch his robe because she thought that would heal her? When Jesus noticed, he made it clear that the robe itself did not have power but told the woman her faith had healed her (Mark 5:24-34).

That robe in Mark 5 was not the ceremonial "stole" the teachers of the law wore in Mark 12. There the Greek word is "himation." It was probably more of a coat or cloak.

Do you remember another time Jesus wore this kind of coat? In John 13, Jesus washes his disciples' feet. But before he could wash the disciples' feet, he took off his outer clothing.

In New Testament times, people bathed before going to a banquet or dinner, such as for the evening meal described in John 13. Those arriving at the meal had on their outer clothing, and it was typical for the servant in the house to wash their feet when they arrived. That was the part of the body that was no longer clean after walking through the dusty streets to the dinner.

**In that context it was significant** that Jesus had to take off his cloak; had he been the servant of the house he would not have had a cloak on. When the cloak means something, taking it off to wash another's feet is more significant. In Mark 12, the teachers of the law did not take off their robes. They enjoyed wearing them, walking around the marketplaces, being greeted with respect and seated at the places of honor at banquets. They thought they were showing what it meant to love God.

In John 13, however, Jesus shows what it means to love God *and* your neighbor. He shows that it requires something of each person. We witnessed that in our overseas assignments in Haiti and Bolivia. Education and strong resumés can create a sense of arrogance and separation, like wearing a ceremonial robe. I've seen it. For North Americans working in another country, education and strong resumés can create a sense of knowing the answers and being prepared to provide them or even impose them. That's why it was always so refreshing to see a highly skilled, highly educated person enter a community with a sense of reverence for the people there. Entering a community with a commitment to listen and learn and show respect for local people did not diminish the skill and education of the outsider. Rather, it created an environment in which dignity and progress could join hands, where collaboration prevailed over polarities between us and them. It demonstrated taking off the robe or cloak to serve others.

**There is another component of the cloak** that is equally important. It is possible to wash another's feet for altruistic reasons but without a sense of reverence. It is possible to serve your neighbor with selfish motivations. But washing another's feet in response to Jesus' call to love both God and your neighbor makes it an act of worship. It makes it a proclamation that Jesus is Lord.

That is what the teachers of the law did not understand. And that is what the widow knew instinctively.

Turning back to the earthquake in January 2010, a Canadian friend of mine was in Haiti as the earth shook and the structures collapsed and the sky turned dark. She wrote of that experience:

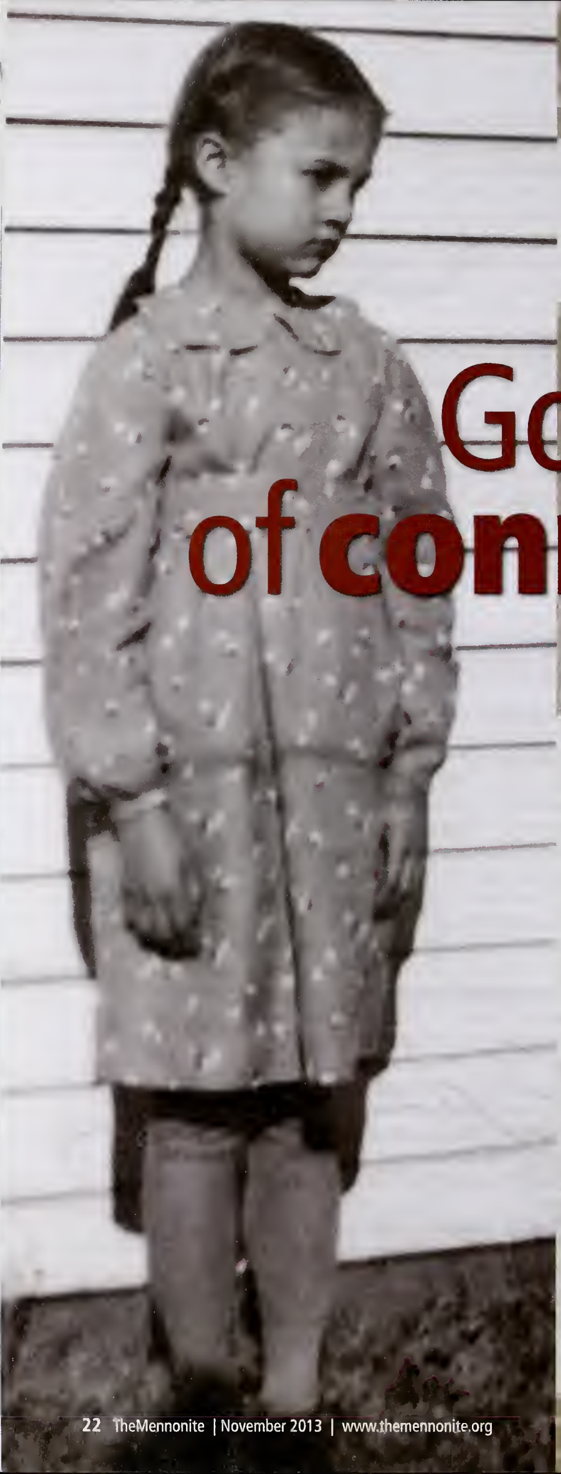
"On the Friday afternoon before leaving Haiti, I asked to be driven downtown. I wanted to chronicle these images of Haiti. I wanted them to be part of my being. I wanted never to forget these days of my life. One image significantly affecting was that of a cross … the sole remnant of what was once a grand church. Throughout my 40 years (and four days) in Haiti, I have had many opportunities to meet people who come to Haiti who believe that they have been called to this mission … to save and fix and heal Haiti. We come … they say, to bring love and happiness. We come because we are blessed. Haiti is poor. Haiti needs us. However, time after time I have heard testimony as to how Haiti has in turn loved, healed, redeemed.

Washing another's feet in response to Jesus' call to love both God and your neighbor makes it an act of worship.

"Perhaps it is that Haiti is not the mission? Perhaps it is we who are the mission? Perhaps it is here, in this poor, devastated corner of the world that Christ lives and calls us to be forgiven? Perhaps that lonely naked and holy icon of the thorn-crowned Christ amid the rubble is the prophetic sign? Perhaps on that fateful day of Jan. 12 we became witness to the supreme sacrifice of Haiti? I pray that in the months and years to come, that it may not signify its last frontier of loss … that of our humanity."

For that is what the teachers of the law had lost—their humanity. That is what we lose if we cling to our flowing robes, our status, and simply admire the resiliency of those less fortunate. May we always keep actions and attitude together, proclaiming by our lives that our faith in God cannot be separated from our service of others.

*Barry C. Bartel is a member of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo., where he gave this sermon on Mission Sunday in November 2012.*



**How praying for the nation's 'enemies' led to a loving connection years later**

# God's web of connection

by Kathleen Weaver Kurtz

Through our prayers
God weaves a web that
connects us to others
in surprising ways.
Much of the time
this web is invisible,
but once in awhile we
catch surprising glimpses of it.
My Aunt Velma told me a story
about such a glimpse,
a story that drew me
into new connections as well.

This photo of the author's Aunt Velma Yoder was taken in March 1941, when she was 7 years and 9 months old. Photo provided

It was December 1941 in an Iowa farmhouse. Supper was over. Papa and Mama pulled up chairs to sit, one on either side of the radio, listening intently. Never did they sit there like this after supper. There were dishes to wash, food to put away, chores to complete. But not tonight. Ignoring the waiting work, they sat there. Both were crying. Velma knew something was wrong. She was not sure what, but her parents' tears kept her in the room. Japanese planes had attacked American ships at Pearl Harbor, and President Roosevelt had declared war on Japan. Papa and Mama explained that war was terrible—many people would be killed, many more injured, homes and belongings would be destroyed.

During the following days the patriotic fervor at school stood in sharp contrast to Velma's experience at home. Her schoolmates said that everyone should go home and look at their toys to see if any were made in Japan. If so, they should take them outside and smash them with a hammer on the sidewalk. Confused, Velma reported this to Mama.

"No, Velma," Mama said in her quiet, firm way, "that's not what we should do. We need to pray for the people of Japan." Translating Mama's response into her 8-year-old perspective, Velma decided to pray for the boys and girls of Japan. They were the ones with whom she could most closely identify. She tried to imagine what war would be like for them. She thought of her most valued possession, her dearly beloved doll. How devastating it would be to lose her. She tried to imagine it smashed to bits in the remains of a bombed-out house. It was hard to fathom such a loss.

So she prayed for the boys and girls of Japan. Every night she prayed for these children who lived half a world away, who looked different from her and spoke a language she couldn't understand. She imagined their families, their homes, their precious toys.

**On the other side of the world**, in Tokyo, lived Hiroshi, also 8. At first the war meant food lines and bomb shelters, but as the war progressed, the danger of bombing increased. Hiroshi's family, except for his father, who continued his job, and his oldest sister, who was required to work in a war factory, went to stay with relatives in Akkeshi, Hokkaido. After Operation Meetinghouse, a massive bombing raid in March 1945 that destroyed much of Tokyo, Hiroshi's father and sister decided to join the rest of the family in Hokkaido. They packed their belongings and took them to a train station for shipping, but that night another bombing raid destroyed both their house and the station. Everything they owned was gone. It took them days to get a train to Hokkaido to join their anxious family.

The family struggled in Hokkaido. Among other things, they were not used to bitterly cold winters. Hiroshi had to work after school, going to a lumberyard to gather shavings, chips and bark for fuel. He could not understand why life had to be so difficult when what he really wanted was to play like his friends. The winter after the war was even worse. The family was forced to search through garbage for potato peels and other food scraps. Hiroshi was so unhappy he thought of throwing himself off a cliff into the frigid sea.

Every night she prayed for these children who lived half a world away, who looked different from her and spoke a language she couldn't understand.

The family moved to Obihiro. When Hiroshi was 18, he learned of an American missionary living there. He gathered up his anger-driven courage and went to a Sunday service, intending to let this American know how angry he was. However, the morning did not go as he planned. Instead of unburdening his anger he found himself listening. The missionary's halting Japanese made it difficult for him to understand the sermon and prayers, but a Japanese person read from ▶

The Kaneko family. Photo provided

Hiroshi Kaneko at age 20. Photo provided

Matthew 5, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." He heard those words clearly. They caught his attention forcefully and followed him home.

**Over the next months, surprise dawned** slowly for Hiroshi as he learned that this American, Carl Beck, and the other Mennonite missionaries did not hate him but were genuinely sorry for the devastation their country had caused in Japan. He was amazed there were Americans who not only believed in nonviolence but actually dedicated their lives to creating peace. While the missionaries introduced him to a new way of thinking about love and forgiveness, it was God's loving welcome lived out by them that slowly began to dissolve the pain and anger that had shaped his growing up.

Back in Iowa, Velma married her high school sweetheart and started a family. She delighted in housekeeping and mothering and faithfully participated in her church community. She lived generously, always willing to help others. In 1962, she and Dean, her husband, moved to Missouri to support a small Mennonite congregation there.

We often do not know what difference our individual prayers make.

**Hiroshi became a Christian** and attended Tokyo Christian College to train as a pastor. He returned to serve in the Obihiro church, where he met his wife, pastored the Asahikawa church, served as a missionary in Ecuador at radio station HCJB and then returned to Japan, where he served as pastor of the Nakashibetsu Mennonite Church until his retirement. In 1991, his son Kenji came to the United States to study at Hesston (Kan.) College.

Velma's children grew up and married. Grandchildren came. The firstborn, Heather, completed high school and enrolled at Hesston College. When she came home with her Japanese boyfriend, Velma welcomed him warmly, as she did all newcomers. When Heather and Kenji married, her world expanded to include a Japanese family.

Kenji's father came to Missouri to visit his son. One Sunday he spoke at church, telling about his difficult childhood and painful wartime experiences. He also told about meeting the Mennonite missionaries who introduced him to Christianity and how learning to know Christ had transformed his anger into love.

Velma was there. As she listened to Hiroshi's story, she was startled to realize that they were the same age. His war experience triggered her memory of listening to the radio with her parents that somber, long-ago evening and her mother's alternative response to the Japanese "enemies." She remembered her prayers for the Japanese children. Chills ran up and down her spine. Standing here before her was one of the children for whom she had prayed all those years ago. Those prayers were a faint memory. She had never given thought to seeing any tangible results, certainly none that would connect with her life. Yet here in front of her stood Hiroshi, his life a testament to God's power to heal and change. Without knowing him, she had prayed for him during some of the most difficult experiences of his life, and now he was here, not a nameless stranger but a member of her family.

She stood up, spine still tingling, and told her part of the story.

**Prayer is a mystery.** We often do not know what difference our individual prayers make. When they are about the specifics of our lives, we look for answers, but when our prayers are general we often let them go without specific expectation. Yet we pray, trusting that our prayers will make a difference.

Hiroshi might have met the Mennonite missionaries, and his son might have married Velma's granddaughter even if she had never prayed for the "boys and girls of Japan." On the other hand, these things might not have happened. Ultimately, I can't determine cause and effect, but neither can I let this story go with a shrug; it is too powerful.

Sir William Temple observed, "When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't." I think he would see a connection between Velma's prayer and the miracle of healing from the wounds of war that touched not only Hiroshi but many lives on several continents.

Our prayers are part of a vast web of human longing woven together by God's amazing power. Velma, Hiroshi and their families are enveloped in this web that has brought life-changing gifts to their lives. That day in a small church in Missouri, the Iowa farm girl and the Japanese city boy touched a common strand of that invisible web and gave thanks for God's astounding providence that connected them in such an amazing, "coincidental" way.

*Kathleen Weaver Kurtz is a retired pastoral counselor ordained by the Virginia Mennonite Conference. She attends Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren.*

# Missions and phone bills

## On how giving to missions is like paying your phone bill

by Wes Bergen

In the past few months, Deb, my wife, and I have been in the process of fund-raising. We are planning to go to Ghana ▶

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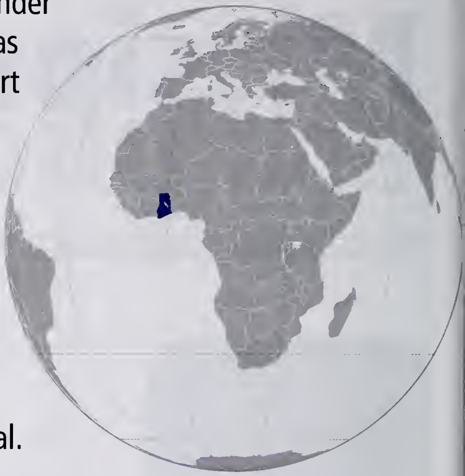
to work at the Good News Theological College and Seminary (gntcs.org). We are working under Mennonite Mission Network as part of the larger mission effort of the Mennonite church. Mission Network requires that money for our work is being raised by our Ministry Support Team, using the contacts of the team while reaching out to the larger church. So my interest in fund-raising has a specific goal.



In thinking about a metaphor and model for giving to missions, I have been drawn to the parallel between missions giving and our phone bill. Giving to missions should be more like the phone bill than like the electric bill or the cable bill. Here is why.

Everything the church does is part of its mission, and many things that happen outside the church are also part of the mission of the church.

The electric bill is part of our lives. I realize that some readers of *The Mennonite* live without electricity or without connection to commercial power companies, but for most of us, the electric bill is just part of life. We may wonder how to spend less on electricity, but we seldom think about whether to continue paying. We also do not need to choose between various power companies or choose the source of our electricity. This means that paying the electric bill is a fairly mindless process. It comes, we wince and then we pay.

**Giving to missions is not and should not** be like this. Missions giving should not be automatic or mindless. It is not best done resentfully or with a mind-set of trying to pay less. We can be aware of the many ways that missions is and can be done, then give thoughtfully and prayerfully. It is also not helpful to start with the question, How can we spend less on missions? So in many ways, giving to missions is not like paying the electric bill.

Giving to missions is also not like paying the cable television bill. Cable television has always been an option. No one needs cable. Many Mennonite readers are proud of their unwillingness to pay a cable bill, especially those who have no television. So cable is a luxury, benefits no one besides oneself or those in one's household and is mostly about individual entertainment.

Obviously, giving to missions should not be like this. While it is an option, it is a positive one. The question is not, Will I spend money for this personal luxury? but instead is, Will I contribute to this good work? Yes, you can live without giving to missions, but less mission work will happen without your help. It can be a natural and joyful response to being part of the body of Christ rather than something we do for our personal entertainment.

Giving to missions is more like paying the phone bill. First, phones are everywhere and are just assumed by almost everyone. More people have phones than are connected to the electric grid. I know someone whose power was cut off, and she managed for a month or two until she could pay her bill. But when her phone got cut off, she acquired another one within a few days.

**This should be our approach** to giving to missions. The church has a mission. In fact, the church is its mission. Without a mission, the church is just a bunch of people getting together. Everything the church does is part of its mission, and many things that happen outside the church are also part of the mission of the church. Not giving to missions should be just as unimaginable as not having access to a phone, even more so.

This leads naturally to the next parallel between the phone bill and missions giving. There are many phone companies vying for your business. Each of these companies has various options and plans from which to choose. They all want to lock you into a long-term contract for regular contributions, but other companies are always trying to persuade you to change your mind. So you have ongoing commitments and ongoing decisions, trying to decide what is the best use for your money.

Giving to missions can also be like this. If I am serious about wanting you to contribute to our work in Ghana, I need to be able to explain to you why you should prefer to contribute to this mission rather than the hundreds of other organizations that are also doing God's work. There are needy people in your town; why send money to Ghana? Your church budget could likely use the money, as well as hundreds of other organizations doing good and important work.

In some ways, I would prefer not to explain this over and over. I want to teach in Ghana rather than spend hours explaining to people what I do and how they can support it. I am good at teaching and bad at fund-raising. Why would I want to spend time doing something I'm bad at?

Yet I do need to be held accountable. You need to know that I am not just sitting in Ghana eating chocolate and relaxing on the beach. You have the right to know that this is not a church-funded vacation or an ego-driven attempt to "convert the poor heathen." So, like the phone company, I need to be able to explain to you why this particular mission is worth your support.

Another parallel between missions giving and the phone bill is that both cost big money. As a family with multiple phones, our phone bill is much larger than any other utility bill. This is "normal" to the millennial generation but is shocking to those of us who are older. We used to spend $25 per month on our one phone. This was what most people paid, regardless of how many people were in the family. There was one phone company, and it was all really simple and straightforward.

The same was true of missions giving. Missions used to be done by missionaries sent out by the church who were paid out of the central budget of the larger church. We gave regularly to the church budget, and this was distributed by them to the various workers worldwide. It was also relatively inexpensive, as workers could live in Asia or Africa for a fraction of the cost of life in North America. Like the phone bill, $25 per month went a long way.

**Today none of these things is true.** Missions are done by a whole variety of agencies and individuals through many church and parachurch agencies. Even in Mennonite Church USA, there is no central budget for mission work. The price of sending workers is also much higher than most people expect. That $25 goes no farther in mission work than it does paying a cell phone bill for multiple people. We can bemoan all these changes, but they are real nonetheless.

Decide what percentage of your phone bill you want to give to missions, then do it on the same schedule.

For these and other reasons, mission work is more like the phone bill than it is like other utility bills. In response, I want to challenge you to connect the two things directly. Decide what percentage of your phone bill you want to give to missions, then do it on the same schedule. Further, decide what mission work best reflects your values, then contribute to this. Review these decisions regularly, whenever you review your phone plan.

Of course, the next step is even more important. Care. Care about and for the various missions of the church. Care can be done in various ways. Pray, ask questions, send notes, send cookies, talk to friends about the good things the church is doing. If people care, the money will take care of itself. If people care, the work will get done. Caring makes it your mission, part of what God is doing in and through you. Your phone company doesn't want to be loved and cared for, but mission workers do. Join us in caring for the worldwide people of God.

*Wes Bergen is a member of New Creation Fellowship Church in Newton, Kan. He and Deb blog at bergenbeats.wordpress.com.*

# To awaken the dawn

## The blessings of gathering with others for daily prayers

by Caitlin Michelle Desjardins

It is still dark outside when I make my way down the block, keenly aware of the January frost that bites with my every step. I arrive just after Hilary, dropped off by her husband on his way to work. Julia and Jennifer have the warmest commute: They only need to make their way from bedrooms to living room (sometimes basking in the luxury of pajamas).

Group morning prayer has been as much about cultivating the discipline of seeing each other daily—checking in, being authentic, griping if need be or sharing ecstatically the prior day's joys—as the prayer itself.

After defrosting and a spate of heartfelt greetings, I sit in my usual spot while someone lights a candle and we divvy up who will read the prayers and who the Psalms.

Just as the first hints of morning slip through the blinds, we quiet and begin.

*Awake, my soul.*  
*Awake, O harp and lyre.*  
*I will awaken the dawn.*

We've been gathering like this, with varying layers of blankets and space heaters greeting us in the morning, since mid-fall. I had returned from a summer with the contemplative and ecumenical Sisters of Grandchamp, where I'd been formed in contemplative prayer, and before that had flirted with morning prayers in a few ways. Missing the rhythm and regularity of monastery life, I was delighted when Julia approached me and asked if I might have interest in gathering to pray in the mornings and then carpooling to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Ekhart, Ind., together.

**On one level it was as much a practical** suggestion as a spiritual one. Too often we ended up following each other to school, which felt, at best, wasteful and, at worst, pretty stupid, since we lived a half-block from each other. The idea of forming a women's morning prayer group had even more practical implications as we proposed it to Hilary, who needed a way to get to work at the Mennonite Church USA offices next door to our seminary. At least one of us (as yet unnamed) welcomed the motivation to stop sleeping in too often.

So we gathered, knowing that beyond the practical, there would indeed be certain spiritual grace, connection with God and with each other. In four months of regular meeting, this grace has emerged in varied ways, sometimes more clearly than others. Unquestionably, group morning prayer has been as much about cultivating the discipline of seeing each other daily—checking in, being authentic, griping if need be or sharing ecstatically the prior day's joys—as the prayer itself. The act of gathering, even prior to Julia lighting the candle or Jen opening us with Scripture and silence, I find to be a prayer in itself. If prayer can mean "a request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God," then our gathering is indeed an expression of thanks: for the faces and hugs of dear friends, for homes and hospitality, for community, for a new day.

**What of the prayers themselves?** From the beginning we've used a prayer book familiar to all of us from a class Marlene Kropf taught at AMBS: *Celtic Benediction* by J. Phillip Newell. The book allows for the kind of openness and silence that I craved after returning from the monastery. The prayers themselves, in the form of poetry, follow the movements of creation and are grounding in their earth imagery while challenging in their call to "dispel the confusions that cling close to our souls." On Fridays, to connect with others who also practice morning prayers and to take advantage of the wonderful Anabaptist prayer book published by the Institute of Mennonite Studies, some of us migrate a block over to join a long-standing Friday morning prayer group of folks a little older than ourselves.

In a world where a thousand daily distractions, technological or otherwise, vie for our attention, the practice of interspersing prayers with silence is an important part of our morning discipline. For some of us, it is a natural way to connect with God, grounding ourselves in intimacy with our Creator through centering prayer. For others, it is about all we can muster at 7:30 a.m. And for others, the silence itself is a discipline that truly takes cultivation. Hilary freely admits: "Spending time in silence is a struggle. It doesn't feel spiritually enlightening to me, but it does feel important. The fact that I don't get immediate gratification from beginning my day this way has helped me develop an intentional commitment to the process of daily prayer and to the people."

To begin the day with the tripartite gift of time with God, friends and a well-placed space heater is truly a practice that for us is orienting. In this same world of distractions, it becomes all too easy to forget my own "true North," to forget amid seminary assignments, lunch meetings and too many appointments that I am here, on this earth, to enjoy friendship with God and with God's people. Morning prayers, and all spiritual practices, are not the stuff of life itself, but they are the latticework, so to speak. Latticework may not be the focus of the rose garden, but ultimately makes it strong and possible. "It's not like it's magic," Hilary reminds me, "like now that I'm praying in the mornings, I find myself infinitely spiritually grounded, but it's an acknowledgement that little things make a difference over the long haul."

In this same world of distractions, it becomes all too easy to forget my own "true North."

**Julia lights the candle this morning.** The stone candleholder is fittingly a depiction of friends holding hands around the light. Jen takes *Celtic Benediction* and opens to this morning's prayers. Hilary chooses a Psalm to read aloud for us all to hear and meditate upon. I cuddle under a blanket, closing my eyes and taking my first truly deep breath of the day. It is a breath of gratitude: for this space, for these friends, for this time of prayer and for another day to appreciate all the little gifts that indeed make life rich and blessed over the long haul.

*Awake, my soul.*
*Awake, O harp and lyre.*
*I will awaken the dawn.*

*Caitlin Michelle Desjardins* lives in *Cleveland Heights, Ohio.*

# From a 'crusading mind' to a 'crucified mind'

**Stanley Green** is executive director of Mennonite Mission Network.

The phenomenal growth of the church outside Europe and North America and some regrettable facets in the history of mission have given rise to calls for a "moratorium" on mission from the West and focus on the local church and its context.

Almost any person reading these words can call to mind mission workers whose work was characterized by a commitment to advocacy for justice and respect for the human dignity of those among whom they live (including being strong champions in the antislavery movement). Yet no one can deny that mission has suffered greatly from its mostly uncritical alliance with Western imperialism. That a broad swathe of the missionary establishment has been in cahoots with the military and expansionist spirit of the colonizing West makes the accusation undeniable and shameful.

In an article entitled "Issues in Mission Today: Challenges for Reflection at Edinburgh 2010," Stephen Bevans observes that for much of its history mission stood as a sign of world conquest. Missionaries were referred to as "soldiers," as Christian "forces" who engaged their work with "a crusading mind" (*Water Buffalo Theology* by Kosuke Koyam).

**As a consequence, mission has been scarred** by a legacy of identification with rapacious neocolonialism that seemed intent on destroying non-Western cultures and using violence or bribes to coerce people to adopt a foreign religio-cultural identity. Mission was seen as aligned with imperialistic designs, and the message of mission was confused with the idea of the superiority of western culture and learning.

As Stephen Neill observes: "Missionaries in the 19th century had to some extent yielded to the colonial complex. Only Western man was man in the full sense of the word; he was wise and good, and members of other races, in so far as they became westernized, might share in this wisdom and goodness. But Western man was the leader, and would remain so for a very long time, perhaps forever" (*A History of Christian Missions*).

In January 2014, when the Council for International Anabaptist Missions (a coalition of about two dozen mission agencies/entities) meets in Chicago, these questions will be on the agenda.

Why are we (or should we be) involved in mission? Is it because we are driven by the need to extend the superiority of the culture we are a part of? Certainly not. Mission is first and foremost of the very essence of the Triune God. The whole biblical story is infused with the energy of God's missionary purpose of creation and recreation. As a creation of the Spirit of God, the essence of the church's being is mission. The church, in every place and in every time, is called to be involved in God's mission, or, as a recent slogan, reaffirmed at the largest ecumenical gathering in the history of the Christian movement (Cape Town 2010), puts it: "The whole church bearing the whole gospel to the whole world." This affirmation celebrates the fact that mission has migrated from its captivity as a unidirectional movement ("from the West to the rest") to becoming multidirectional and polycentric.

**The great new reality of our time** is the shift from subject-object relations that have characterized missions in the last two centuries to a new era in which every church can embrace and live into its own identity as a subject of mission. This invites a recognition that every church is called to global mission as both a receiver of the gifts of others and a sharer of the gifts that have been entrusted to it. This dawning of a new era in mission that is truly global, where mission is from everywhere to everywhere, must advance on the presumption of continued mission involvement from the West, partnered with the missionary energies from every other part of the world.

What we need is not a moratorium. Rather than indulge a withdrawal syndrome, based on our sense of guilt because of past failures, what we need in Western mission is a continuing conversion from what Koyama calls a "crusading mind" to a "crucified mind." We need a conversion from presuming that we are at the center of mission to a postcolonial mind-set that is vulnerable and committed to interdependence and mutuality. What is needed from Western churches is not a disengagement from mission (a true aberration) or a reprehensible denial that continues to communicate superiority, paternalism, imperialism and the arrogance of the Western church. We need a commitment to participation in the global mission community in the spirit of servanthood, humility and relationships. As we like to describe it, "Third Way Mission"—or, simply put, mission in the way of Jesus. TM

We need a commitment to participation in the global mission community in the spirit of servanthood, humility and relationships.

# Finding a way forward

About two years ago I decided to become a pescetarian, eating only fish and vegetables. I made that change not for ethical reasons but to improve my health. As a result, I lost weight and lowered my cholesterol.

There are some Christians, including most Seventh-day Adventists, who use the Bible to argue we should all be vegetarians. They point to God's command to Adam in Genesis 1:29, "every seed bearing plant … and every tree that has fruit. They will be yours for food." It isn't until after the flood that God removes this dietary restriction, telling Noah, "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you" (Genesis 9:3). God later restricts the Jewish diet to Kosher foods.

**Our culinary preferences are central** to our cultural identity. Restaurants are named by nationality; Italian, Mexican etc. For someone to imply that the Bible says you should be a vegetarian goes to the heart of an individual's identity. It is also something that cannot be changed easily.

If you love cheeseburgers, you may support your choice by saying, "God gave mankind incisors to rip meat" or noting that Old Testament dietary restrictions were superseded in Christ. And Jesus ate the Paschal lamb with his disciples.

Another, arguing for vegetarianism, could counter, Yes, but Paul contended that if eating meat (sacrificed to idols) offends your brother's conscience (referring now to the 21st-century brother who thinks it immoral to kill animals for food) "then do not eat it" (1 Corinthians 10: 28).

Many are familiar with the principles set forth in Mennonite Church USA's *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love*. Similarly, Mennonite Church Canada developed guidelines for corporate biblical discernment in a document titled *Being a Faithful Church 4*. It provides guidelines, developed by a broad cross-section of the church and penned by Robert J. Suderman to "test the spirits." It provides 12 paths to follow in biblical interpretation and six ditches to avoid when using the Bible to make a point. Briefly stated they are as follows:

Paths to follow: (1) The life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus are central to our interpretation of Scripture. (2) Context makes a difference to our reading of the Bible. We need to consider both when the Scriptures were written and our time and place today. (3) Scripture interprets Scripture. (4) Jesus interprets Scripture. (5) Take the whole canon. (6) Scripture is a living Word in a world in need of redemption. (7) The Holy Spirit guides us. (8) We are part of a larger story. (9) Knowing is doing (i.e., we must change our behavior to reflect our knowledge of what God expects of us walking as disciples of Jesus Christ). (10) Scripture is a delight. (11) Be aware of other God followers. (12) God intends to bring wholeness to Creation.

Ditches to avoid: (1) Do not leave Jesus without a context. (2) Do not assume your context is either normal or unchanging. (3) Do not leave out the Old Testament. (4) Avoid proof-texting (i.e., taking a single passage out of context or quoting a text without considering its context and purpose). (5) Do not force God to fit your understanding. (6) Do not generalize.

**These guidelines are helpful**, but we can only find a way forward together if we do not insist ours is the only valid interpretation of Scripture. We seem to be able to disagree about many points in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Many congregations do not hold rigidly to Mennonite Church USA's peace position but allow disagreement. Some even let people in the military join their church. Congregations take these actions, even though embracing Jesus' life of peace is central to our understanding of what it means to be an Anabaptist Christian. I've heard that during World War II, as many as half the men in some congregations supported the U.S. war effort by joining the military. And for many years we have allowed area conferences to decide whether or not to ordain women to pastoral ministry.

In non-Amish families, we do not cut off relatives, even when they greatly offend us. We love them despite our differences and disagreements. My own extended family has made adjustments to accommodate my pescetarian preferences during holiday meals.

Yet in the church we find it difficult if not impossible to extend grace to some who interpret Scripture differently. In the April issue, pastor Harvey Yoder reminds us, "Disagreements are inevitable, divisions are optional." I pray that when we disagree on biblical interpretation, we will find a way as a family of faith to remain committed to each other and to our common identity and mission. May God grant us grace to make it so.

**Steve Carpenter** is congregational chair of Immanuel Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

We can only find a way forward together if we do not insist ours is the only valid interpretation of Scripture.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Larry Miller to retire from Everence

## Came to Mennonite Mutual Aid from Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union

On Oct. 15, Everence president and CEO Larry D. Miller announced his retirement, scheduled for September 2014. "My time as president and CEO of Everence has been enjoyable and rewarding," says Miller. "Everence is unique. Few denominations have such a financial organization, so I was passionate about keeping and transforming it for future generations within the church."

Miller served as president and CEO of the organization's credit union for 16 years. Then he joined Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA) as its chief executive in 2006. When the two organizations united to create Everence, he continued in the role of president and CEO. Everence's corporate offices are in Goshen, Ind.

Larry Miller

Founded almost 70 years ago in 1945, Everence now serves approximately 80,000 members and manages more than $2 billion in assets. During his tenure, Miller oversaw the creation of Everence in 2010, which brought together the financial services of MMA and the banking services of Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union. Together, they offer comprehensive faith-based services for individuals and organizations.

**Miller led the organization** in strengthening its field offices with financial advisors around the country as well as the expansion of investment management services. Everence provides financial services and advisory expertise in banking, insurance, investments, retirement and charitable giving.

In recent years, the organization worked to bring stability to clients navigating the economic recession and slow recovery. Through its Sharing Fund grants and assistance through its partner LSS Financial Counseling, Everence also provided support to people weathering financial difficulties due to the economic downturn.

Everence board chair D. Duane Oswald, from Fresno, Calif., visited the corporate offices on Oct. 15 to speak to staff and field advisors about the leadership transition.

"The board has been very pleased with Larry's vision and direction for Everence during his tenure," said Oswald. "He brought together the church and business aspects of Everence in a positive way."

**Oswald and the board** have created preliminary plans for the leadership transition. At its next meeting, Oct. 25-26, the board planned to finalize the search committee membership, process and timeline.

"We expect the next leader to build on the successes that the organization is already achieving and to provide a vision for the future," said Oswald. "We know we'll need to make adjustments, since Everence health plan services are changing, and we expect to strengthen banking and investment management services over time."—*Judy Martin Godshalk for Everence*

## Weinses will receive Everence Journey award Nov. 10 in Newton, Kan.

Dr. Tim and Kathy Wiens have been named recipients of the 2013 Everence national Journey Award. The award recognizes the Wienses, of Newton, Kan., for their generosity in sharing their time and resources. The award will be presented Nov. 10 at First Mennonite Church in Newton. Everence president and CEO Larry D. Miller will present the award. Created in 2001, the Journey Award is a way for Everence to highlight what people of faith are doing as stewards of their God-given gifts.

"We at Everence are happy to honor Tim and Kathy for improving the lives of so many people," said Andrea Unzicker, Everence Central Kansas Regional Director. "They have turned their concern for children and families in difficult situations into actions that we feel should be recognized as outstanding examples of stewardship."—*Everence*

# Committed to rural India

## Husband and wife dedicate lives to work at small mission hospital.

Fresh out of medical school, Dr. Kanchan Naik chose to work at a mission hospital where she could get a wide array of medical experience. Kanchan thought she'd work at Sewa Bhawan Hospital in Jagdeeshpur, India, for a few years, developing her skills as one of three doctors at the hospital, located in a remote area three hours from the nearest city, Raipur.

Sewa Bhawan Hospital is a 50-bed hospital that serves about 500,000 people. It was established in 1928 by mission workers from the Commission on Overseas Mission, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network.

**The hospital is now run** by Emmanuel Hospital Association, an organization started in 1970 to maintain the long-term stability of 13 Indian mission hospitals. Sewa Bhawan Hospital and two other hospitals started by Mennonite missionaries are part of this association that Mission Network supports with funds and medical workers.

Although young doctors usually leave mission hospitals in favor of higher paying jobs in the city, Kanchan, an Ob-Gyn doctor by training, relished the long hours and variety of cases and decided to commit her life to mission hospitals.

"I saw how people couldn't go anywhere else," says Kanchan. "I came to love the people." After family members introduced her to Tushar Naik, a trained surgeon working as medical director at a Lutheran mission hospital, they married and started what is now 25 years of work together at mission hospitals.

Initially, they started at Tushar's hospital. But in 1993, senior staff from Sewa Bhawan Hospital contacted the Naiks, asking them to serve in Jagdeeshpur. They wanted Tushar to be their medical director. The Naiks accepted the positions and have worked at Sewa Bhawan for 20 years while also raising their daughter, Aparajita, and son, Ronak.

In September, Kanchan spent several weeks traveling in North America to visit friends and bring her daughter to Goshen (Ind.) College. She shared her experience of service at Sewa Bhawan with several churches and other groups.

**The Naiks need to work hard** to keep doctors and nurses at the hospital. Young doctors will typically come for initial postings but are lured away by better facilities and urban environments.

"It's a struggle," says Kanchan. "They only come for short-term assignments. Often they go on to get government jobs that pay better than we can. We've also had many nurses come from the area, but few stay."

The Naiks often collaborate with doctors from other hospitals to exchange services. For example, one day a month, Tushar will go to another hospital and perform general surgeries, since they do not have a general surgeon. In exchange, a doctor who specializes in eye surgeries will come from that hospital to perform cataract surgeries at Sewa Bhawan one day a month.

David Fast

Sima Weaver (former Mennonite Mission Network worker), right, and Kanchan Naik sing to patients during their morning rounds at the Sewa Bhawan Hospital in Jagdeeshpur, India.

This partnership lets patients receive specialized care from the limited number of mission doctors in the area.

**In order to bring more nurses** to their hospital, the Naiks want to start a nursing college together with Champa Christian Hospital, a hospital that's also part of the Emmanuel Hospital Association. The plans are still in the initial stages, but the hope is that nursing students trained in a rural hospital environment will choose to serve long-term at Sewa Bhawan or other mission hospitals. But even if they don't, a steady stream of student interns would help the nursing staff of the hospital.

Despite the challenges of not enough staff and small budgets, the Naiks are dedicated to offering the best care to their patients. Committed doctors have been a godsend to Sewa Bhawan Hospital and other small mission hospitals. The Naiks continue to welcome service visits from North American doctors and other medical professionals. Because Sewa Bhawan is a general-treatment facility, they especially need generalist medical personnel. But they often have cases that sometimes require specific expertise. So Kanchan and Tushar are always seeking connections with other doctors and nurses to find the best care for cases that lie outside their competency. Despite the sacrifice it sometimes takes, the Naiks are exactly where they want to be: treating patients.

"I receive many blessings from the Lord treating patients who otherwise would have died at home," says Kanchan. "I see lots of miracles."—*Sara Alvarez of Mission Network*

# Budget cut felt far and wide

## Mission Network offers help to local food banks.

Each day the Community Food Bank of South Arizona provides food for 62,800 meals. But the U.S. Congress' cut of $40 billion from the food stamp program may change that. Without help from the food stamp program or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, food banks may be stretched to the limit. Hungry people will turn to food banks and food kitchens across America—where some of Mennonite Mission Network's service program participants volunteer.

Each day, the Downtown Soup Kitchen in Anchorage, Alaska, serves at least 300 lunches. Marlene Allebach, a Service Adventure participant in Anchorage, spends her days making sandwiches and cutting up vegetables for the guests. To this food kitchen, the federal budget cuts could mean an influx of guests, which may make the already limited coffee, tea and serving ware even scarcer.

At the Community Food Bank of South Arizona, Anna Johnson, a Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) participant, is thankful that individuals can use food stamps to purchase local produce. It encourages families to eat locally and healthier, Johnson says.

**At food distribution organizations** like the Community Action Coalition, in Madison, Wis., Brian O'Leary, an MVS worker, picks up donations from Panera Bread, grocery stores and even the University of Wisconsin's delis to deliver to food banks and food kitchens.

The Community Action Coalition has already streamlined its operations, but in order to continue, some programs will need to be cut drastically. O'Leary is afraid it will most affect their ability to provide fresh produce.

"Providing a healthy, local option to everyone regardless of income is something we pride ourselves on," he says.

Although the cut will happen over 10 years, a $4 billion annual reduction worries Johnson.

"I am not sure how some individuals and families are going to put food on the table without support from programs that assist the hungry," she says. "Many of the people these cuts will affect are members of the working poor or are women with infants or children who are already struggling to make ends meet."

**The cut to the food stamp program** is just one more thing that makes life harder. According to O'Leary, housing and medical insurance bills affect food availability as well.

"All these issues are connected, and somebody who no longer has to worry about housing or paying all their income to insurance will inevitably have more money [for] food," says O'Leary.

Together, Mennonite Mission Network service program participants suggest the following ways to help local food banks:

1. Volunteer.
2. Learn to grow food with others. Sharing knowledge about gardening is just as important as sharing food, says Johnson.
3. Let state representatives know how you feel about the budget cut.
4. Donate food or money.

"Most of our food at the soup kitchen is donated to us by local businesses, farmers and hunters," says Allebach. "We are so blessed to have these donations. I think without these donations our fridges would be almost empty. Whether it's volunteering or donating money, food or products, anything you can do would be amazing."—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

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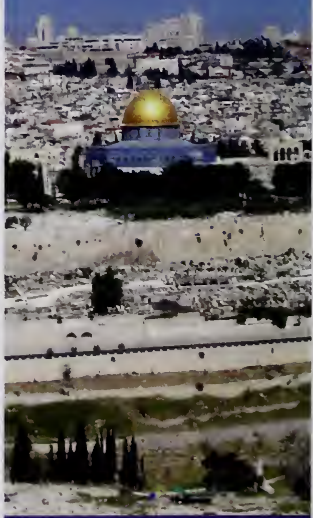

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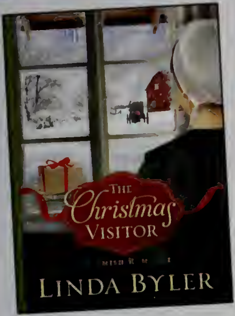
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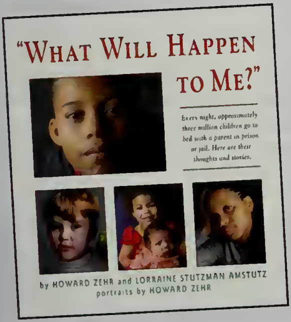
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# Scholar talks about white allies

## Bailey visits denominational offices in Elkhart, Ind., in September.

Craig Welscott

From left: Steve Hochstetler Shirk, Ann Jacobs, Wilma Bailey and Stanley Green discuss Bailey's presentations at the Elkhart, Ind.,offices.

Shoulder-tapping and sharing inside information will help Mennonite leadership more accurately reflect the diversity that is within the church, said Wilma Bailey, who specializes in Old Testament studies at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.

Bailey shared her insights during a Sept. 25 visit to the six Mennonite agencies located in the Elkhart offices. Bailey explained that true diversity and inclusion require the work of "white allies," people of a dominant white culture who act in solidarity with people of color without assuming control of the struggle for human dignity. In doing so, white allies take responsibility to heal their own racism.

**Bailey said that one of the best ways** to be a white ally is to provide opportunities for people of color by affirming their gifts through shoulder-tapping and sharing the information usually only accessible to those within the inner circle of white privilege.

"When people of color come into an organization, they often don't have the inside information to know how an organization really works," Bailey said. "We need to make a real effort to identify young people of color who can be potential leaders."

Because there are still few people of color holding leadership positions in Mennonite Church USA, the advance notice that often lands jobs before they are publically posted isn't available to them. "Most leaders are white men, so when they think of a successor ... they just can't imagine a black female being able to fill their shoes," Bailey said.

There have been exceptions in Bailey's life, and they have helped her become a much-sought-after scholar, professor, consultant and lecturer with three graduate degrees, including a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. She is currently teaching at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, where she specializes in Old Testament studies.

"Many times we don't even know who our white allies are because they work behind the scenes," Bailey said. "In my professional positions, it was usually someone who called me and asked me if I wanted a job."

One of those times was after Bailey graduated with a M.Div. degree from what is now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. A white church leader, John Paul Wenger, called and asked her to serve as assistant pastor of a Mennonite church in Saginaw, Mich. When Bailey began her ministry at Grace Chapel, she became the first woman to receive a ministerial credential from the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.—*Mennonite Mission Network staff*

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# Gandhi Center honors Howard Zehr, Vida Huber

## Zehr is a semiretired EMU faculty member, and Huber is a '61 EMU graduate.

Lindsey Kolb

Restorative justice expert Howard Zehr (left), chats with a former student he has mentored, Josh Bacon, who is James Madison University judicial affairs director.

Six years after conferring its first award for "global nonviolence" work on Desmond Tutu, followed by a second award in 2009 to Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, the Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence at James Madison University (JMU), Harrisonburg, Va., is inaugurating a new award to highlight individuals from the local community whose lives epitomize the promotion of "justice and nonviolence through education, scholarship and engagement."

The first honorees of this new "community service" award are two people with close ties to Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg: (1) Howard Zehr, Ph.D., a semiretired faculty member, who is being recognized for his seminal role in the foundation and promotion of the field of restorative justice around the world, and (2) Vida Huber, Ph.D., a 1961 graduate of EMU who chaired EMU's nursing program from 1967 to 1984 and then held leadership roles at JMU until her sudden death in 2005.

Zehr is co-directing, with EMU professor Carl Stauffer, the Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice at EMU, established in the fall of 2012.

**Zehr began teaching restorative justice** at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in 1996 but recently stepped away from teaching. He served as the center's co-director for five years, 2002-2007.

Zehr's longevity in the field of restorative justice, global renown and early book on the subject (*Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, published in 1990) has caused him to be dubbed the "grandfather of restorative justice." He is the author, co-author or editor of 22 books, plus the source of dozens of chapters, op-ed pieces, and other presentations.

In wide demand around the world, Zehr has given restorative justice presentations in 35 states and 25 countries.

As an example, Zehr has done eight speaking tours in New Zealand, a country that has restructured its juvenile justice system to put restorative conferences at its core, with remarkable results.

On the local level, JMU's director of judicial affairs, Josh Bacon, Ph.D., is one who has been influenced by Zehr. In a blog posted on March 18, 2011, Bacon wrote: "I as well as many others who have practiced student discipline in the university setting thought we knew what restorative justice was. Well, after studying with the 'grandfather' of the field, Howard Zehr, I can say, 'I was extremely wrong' in my understanding of restorative justice."

He continued: "Learning about the principles and practices of restorative justice has transformed my view of the potential of student discipline and re-energized my professional focus. I have seen restorative justice challenge our students in a new way and transform their view of conflict and relationships."

**At the time of her death,** Vida Huber was an associate dean of JMU's College of Integrated Science and Technology (CISAT). She was also director of JMU's Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services and professor of nursing.

"Vida was very much committed and motivated to help bring about opportunities on this campus where individuals preparing to be professionals in various health and human services fields could learn to work together," says JMU provost Jerry Benson, who was dean of CISAT at the time of Huber's death.

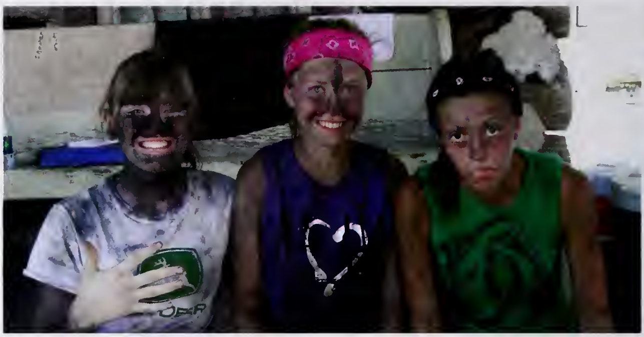
The Mahatma Gandhi Center's Global Nonviolence Community Service Award is conferred in recognition of "visionary leadership and enduring commitment to the creation of a more compassionate, equitable and caring community," says Gary S. Race, director of the Gandhi Center. He anticipates that the community service award will be given every second year, alternating in the future with the center's global nonviolence award, which has not been awarded since 2009.

The community service awards officially were conferred in a by-invitation ceremony at JMU on Oct. 2, a day that corresponded with the birthday of Gandhi. Vida's husband, retired EMU staff member Harold E. Huber, accepted his wife's posthumous award.—*Bonnie Price Lofton for Eastern Mennonite University*

# Tasting Native American history

## Workers cut trees, string barbed wire in Montana.

Photo provided



Altona, Manitoba, volunteers after a day of removing burned trees

This past summer, some 70 teens and their sponsors experienced a Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) project "plus." The pluses included a taste of archaeology, exposure to significant Native American history and interaction—lots of basketball—with youth of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Busby and Lame Deer, Mont.

They also got a crash course in the rigors of cattle ranching and the "brutally hard work"—as rancher John Bailey put it—of installing fencing in eastern Montana's "tremendously rough badlands terrain, with huge elevation changes in very short distances."

**The scale of the damage inflicted by wildfires** in July and August 2012 overwhelmed eastern Montana ranchers. Literally all fences on Busby-area ranches were destroyed, Bailey said, leaving 250,000 acres of open range in which cattle, driven by flames and smoke, scattered and mixed.

MDS summer volunteers rehabbed 25 to 30 miles of barbed-wire fencing. They patched wire and strung new wire—clipping and stapling it to posts—rolled up mile upon mile of old wire and drove steel posts. They also chopped down thousands of burnt trees along the fence lines for ranchers in and around the reservation to prevent future damage to the repaired fences, said Paul Unruh of Newton, Kan., MDS project director of the Busby summer program.

Bailey lost all 72 miles of his ranch's barbed-wire barriers, 10 miles of it shared with the Cheyenne reservation. MDS volunteers helped repair some stretches of fencing along the reservation that keep feral horses off the roadways.

Although Kathy Knobloch, a conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and a reservation member, estimates fewer than 10 percent of reservation families ranch, the activity is vital to its economy. The grazing fees of tribal members who lease pasture provide the reservation's only income, Knoblach says. The ranchers also hire other tribal members for day jobs, such as riding and branding, which help ease the hardship caused by the reservation's 60 to 70 percent unemployment rates.

**Bailey expressed profound appreciation** for the hardworking volunteers. Some 30 to 45 percent of the area's terrain is too steep for mechanized post-hole augurs, so steel posts must be installed by hand in those areas. "It's not work for lightweights," Bailey said.—*Emily Will for Mennonite Disaster Service*

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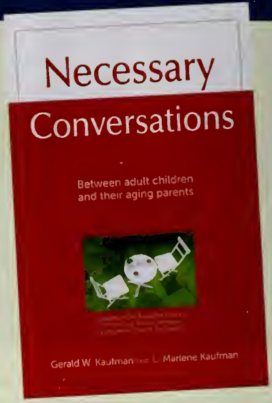
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# 1,000 gather in Kinshasa for ordinations

## Mennonite Church of Congo last of three groups to open ministry to women

Nancy Myers

Sidonie Swana Falanga receives a Bible from Adolphe Komwesa, president of the Mennonite Church of Congo, at her ordination in Kinshasa on Sept. 22.

More than 1,000 Congolese Mennonites gathered on Sept. 22 in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to witness and celebrate the ordination of two women and two men.

Sidonie Swana Falanga and Fabienne Ngombe Kidinda were the first women to be ordained to ministry in the Mennonite Church of Congo, known as CMCO (Communauté Mennonite au Congo).

A third woman of the denomination, Bercy Mundedi, was ordained in Kalonda, Western Kasai Province, on Oct. 6, along with four men.

"This is a very special day for the Mennonite church," CMCO President Adolphe Komwesa Kalunga proclaimed in his Kinshasa address. "The door is wide open to you," he said to the women in the assembly. "The barrier is broken."

The five-hour services in Kinshasa and Kalonda included multiple choral performances, instructions to the candidates and their congregations and jubilant dancing and gift-giving. Sermons and comments from witnesses focused on the biblical and social bases for women's leadership.

"We have been practicing sexual discrimination. That is not good for the church," said Paul Kadima, a Kinshasa pastor. "Now we have put in practice Galatians 3:28. In the church we are equal."

Robert Irundu, CMCO's national youth president, said he believed it took time for the church to approve women's ordination "because CMCO wanted to study the declaration of Paul requiring women to be silent in the assembly. But the Bible also says there is no distinction between men and women."

"The young people are full of joy. We want to encourage young women to study theology," Irundu said.

Madeleine Musaga, a Mennonite woman who is a national deputy representing Gungu in Bandundu Province, said, "This is a holy day for me, to see women honored. Women should hold their heads high, and men should support them. We women are fighting for decision-making posts in politics, and we must also do that in the church."

Charlotte Djimbo Ndjoko, a Mennonite Brethren woman who attended the Kinshasa ceremony, said that Swana and Kidinda "have struggled along with men for years and years for this ordination. Men have resented them. Thanks be to God that these men have now recognized that women have a place in the church in pastoral ministry and evangelization. We are very happy. We will support them as Mennonite sisters. And we invite other women and girls to join them."

CMCO is the last of the three Mennonite communities in Congo to ordain women. The Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo has been ordaining women since 2000. The Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo ordained a woman for the first time in July 2012, during celebrations of the church's 50th anniversary.

The struggle in CMCO for women's ordination has taken place over decades. Swana, 59, received a degree in theology in 1995 and has long served in a pastoral role alongside her husband, Rev. Léonard Falanga. She has been a leader in organizing women who have studied theology, teaching on the issue and attempting to persuade church leaders and pastors that women's ordination is based on biblically sound principles.

We have been practicing sexual discrimination. That is not good for the church.—Paul Kadima

"We did not want to conduct a physical [violent] struggle." Swana said in an interview. "Our weapon is prayer."

Ngombe, 63, received a degree in theology in 1998 and has served as an assistant pastor in several Kinshasa churches since 2005.

All three women studied at the Protestant University of Kinshasa, now known as Christian University of Kinshasa. Mundedi, 47, graduated in 1996.

In November, two more CMCO women, identified by church leaders as Mubi Mutemba and Mundombila, will be ordained in Kananga, Western Kasai.—*Nancy Myers and Charlie Malembe for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission*

# Helping Cambodian sex trafficking survivors

## An Eastern Mennonite Mission worker is on Daughters of Cambodia team.

Photo provided

Jenna Eshleman with her host brother, Kevin, and host sister, Elizabeth, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Eastern Mennonite Missions worker Jenna Eshleman spent the past year working with survivors of sex trafficking in Cambodia's capital city of Phnom Penh. She worked with a team of four Cambodian social workers, serving as social work manager with Daughters of Cambodia, a nonprofit organization that provides social services, employment, Bible studies and some medical services to former sex workers. Staff encourage their clients to remain in their own homes with their families. The organization believes the best way to promote lasting change is to help its clients learn how to make changes within their current environment. Because clients continue to live with their families, the organization has a male social worker who often works with the husbands and fathers of female clients.

"The approach of staying within their environment is really helpful for some clients," says Eshleman. "They can start making changes at home, and if they have ongoing problems, they can always come back to the social workers and get advice. When clients have difficulty breaking out of their addictions or cycles of abuse, the social workers help them set goals to change their situations."

Daughters of Cambodia has several businesses where its clients can work: two cafés that sell coffee, smoothies and baked goods; a spa; a boutique that sells the products the clients produce; and a guest house for tourists.—*Chris Fretz of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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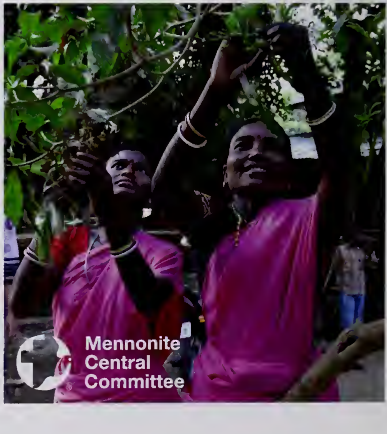

# Ballestas threatened by Colombian authorities

## Mennonite Central Committee urges support of founder of organization.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) urges support of Ricardo Esquivia Ballestas, founder of MCC partner Asociación Sembrando Semillas de Paz (Sowing Seeds of Peace Association, known as Sembrandopaz) and other community leaders, all of whom have received threats and intimidations from Colombian authorities.

Earlier this month, credible sources (who remain unnamed for fear of reprisal) confirmed the threats against Esquivia and other leaders in the nonviolent Movement of the Mountain Zone of El Carmen de Bolívar, one of whom has already been detained. Esquivia began his advocacy work in Colombia decades ago with small-scale farmers, says Bonnie Klassen, MCC's area director for South America and Mexico. "Their successful efforts to gain legal access to land ran counter to the economic interests of some powerful political and economic leaders in the region," she says.

Esquivia and Sembrandopaz started work with the Movement of the Mountain Zone in 2012, helping communities seek reparations for displacement, the right to return to their land and protection against future violence or forced relocation. In April, they held a peaceful march requesting dialogue with local, state and national governments.

On Sept. 9, Movement of the Mountain Zone leader Jorge Luis Montes Hernández was arrested by a government prosecutor. Montes has been accused of belonging to the FARC guerrilla group, criminal conspiracy, homicide, forced displacement and extortion.

MCC also has confirmed with a source inside a public defender's office that there are investigations into issuing arrest warrants for Esquivia, and that a pre-arrest warrant already exists. The current threats are similar to ones Esquivia faced in 1989, 1993 and 2004.

MCC Canada and MCC U.S. sent a joint letter to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon asking him to condemn all threats against Esquivia as well as protect him and other community leaders. MCC U.S. invites all to join the call for safety for Esquivia by contacting their members of Congress and the U.S. embassy in Colombia at http://ow.ly/p1VGI.—*Emily Loewen of MCC Canada*

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# The Corinthian Plan stays strong

## Health insurance plan covers 450 congregations and 1,000 lives.

The Corinthian Plan has begun an open enrollment, which will continue to March 31, 2014, for employees of eligible Mennonite Church USA congregations. The open enrollment matches that of the Insurance Marketplaces, set up as part of the Affordable Care Act.

If congregations would like to enroll in the plan outside the open enrollment window, they still may apply but must go through an underwriting process.

The open enrollment change was one of several updates The Corinthian Plan Board approved at its Sept. 27 meeting.

Despite a projected national medical inflation rate of 10.5 percent, the average premium increase for The Corinthian Plan will be less than half that amount, but it will vary by congregation, based on demographic changes.

Congregations participating in the plan but waiving health coverage will see a reduction in the waiver fee in 2014. Other costs, such as dental and vision premiums and Fair Balance Fund contributions, will remain the same.

The Corinthian Plan continues to maintain stable participation and a strong financial position as the 2014 plan year begins on Jan. 1.

"We are pleased with what The Corinthian Plan is able to accomplish as it covers nearly 450 congregations and over 1,000 lives," says Keith Harder, director of The Corinthian Plan. "And the board continues to analyze the long-term impact on the plan of the Affordable Care Act."

Harder says the board will continue to evaluate The Corinthian Plan to ensure it continues to advance the goals of the church and the needs of the congregations it serves. The Corinthian Plan is administered by Everence Financial, a stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA.

"The Church Alliance, of which Everence is a member, continues to encourage lawmakers to make changes to the health-care law that would solidify the ongoing value of The Corinthian Plan for the denomination, but it will take some time before we get a clear picture of what any changes will be or will look like," Harder says.

The Corinthian Plan is owned by Mennonite Church USA and its participating congregations. Everence administers the plan, and claims are paid by Blue Cross Blue Shield.
—*Jeff Shafer for Everence*

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# Triking for Dakota land justice

## Stoesz shares his conviction about land justice for the Dakota people.

As John Stoesz pedals his recumbent trike through southern Minnesota, he faces two realities—the dedication of today's farmers to the land and the conspicuous absence of Dakota people on their ancestral land.

He passes row after row of perfectly straight lines of corn. More than 150 years ago, buffalo roamed here. The former executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Central States is calling attention to the injustices perpetrated on the Dakota people and the subsequent advantages to white settlers and their descendants as he bicycles 2,000 miles through former Dakota land. The forced exodus of the Dakota people and subsequent bounty paid for Dakota scalps took place during and after the U.S.-Dakota war of 1862.

Stoesz strategically planned his September and October trip through 40 counties. Last year, Stoesz' family decided to sell their grandfather's farm, forcing him to decide what to do with profit of land taken from the Dakota. Stoesz knew about the injustices through his work with MCC Central States' Indigenous Vision Center.

Through an Indigenous Vision Center educational exercise, Stoesz learned about the Doctrine of Discovery, a series of papal proclamations that gave European Christian explorers the freedom to "invade, search out, capture, vanquish and subdue all … pagans whatsoever."

Stoesz says: "Through the land, I think I have benefited from an oppressive system. It's not that my ancestors were directly involved in the oppression in the worst violent ways, but they certainly benefitted from it, and I benefit from it."

Through the counsel of the Indigenous Vision Center, Stoesz connected with Oyate Nipi Kte (The People Shall Live), a Minnesota-based organization focusing its work on the recovery of Dakota traditional knowledge and culture. Stoesz decided to give half his profit for indigenous land justice, including a contribution toward the purchase of land for Oyate Nipi Kte.

Founder Waziyatawin says: "It has been extraordinarily important for me to see a beneficiary of Dakota land loss take this step because it helps restore my sense of hope in the possibility of justice for our people. He has modeled a way to help make amends because he has focused on the issue of land recovery."—*Tina Schrag and Linda Espenshade*

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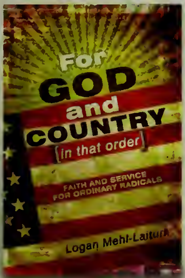

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# Creation care and the problem of racism

## Seidel: Efforts at creation care can become expressions of white privilege.

Not too long ago, our Mennonite congregation in Lancaster, Pa., looked deliberately at issues of the environment, justice and spirituality through a "creation care" worship and adult education series. This is not uncommon in Mennonite congregations in the United States and Canada. Indeed, the issue was again taken up by Mennonite Church USA in a resolution discussed at its 2013 assembly in Phoenix.

In our congregation, one element of that series of worship, reflection and prayer was a discussion on creation care and the problem of racism. While at first glance the connections between these two may not seem clear, we discussed why the theology and ethics of creation care are not unrelated to the sin of racism that persists in the church.

Our efforts at caring for creation can themselves become expressions of white privilege, underscoring the need for relationships of mutuality and accountability as we journey toward racial justice and creaturely solidarity.

Perhaps in the first place, to talk about this connection—a sort of a creation care ethic of antiracism—is to recognize a kind of irony and even doubts in our efforts. Caring for creation moves us toward a creaturely solidarity rooted in a deeper recognition of the image of God in all God's children—actively working to dismantle the racism around and among us. But it also recognizes the possibility that our efforts at caring for creation can themselves become expressions of white privilege, underscoring the need for relationships of mutuality and accountability as we journey toward racial justice and creaturely solidarity.

"Creation care" moves us to reflect on the notion of the God of Creation and the kind of theology of creation we espouse. One outstanding element of this is seen in the second movement of creation (Genesis 1:6-8). On day two we are introduced to air and water, the two most defining characteristics of our planet; two of the most basic necessities of life. But day two also speaks to God's role as Lord over all creation.

In such a creation theology, the implication of this lordship means nothing less than the full dependence on God as the source of our identity. Trusting in God and embracing a creaturely solidarity because of that trust emerges only when we acknowledge God as Creator and Lord of creation. Writer Julie Clawson describes this confession as one in which "we can stop asserting ourselves over others and refusing to responsibly and lovingly see them as part of the community of the *imago Dei*" ("Embracing Creation Theology," God's Politics Blog, April 15, 2011).

*Imago Dei* is a Latin term that translates "image of God" and asserts that all humans are created in God's image as described later in Genesis: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

**Rejecting our creaturehood** is one of the greatest temptations of human beings and has an impact on the rest of creation. This idolatry results in a violation of the *imago Dei* both in ourselves and in others. And this is one place where we might locate a root cause of the problem of racism.

Two Christian theologians who courageously opposed racism were Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr. They believed that Christ represents the oneness of the human race and that racism does violence to the one God and to the human race. Theologian Josiah Young argues that Bonhoeffer and King saw racism as a mortal sin that Christians must purge from their churches and undermine wherever it appears in society. Both believed humankind to be a single race by virtue of the fact that, regardless of their physical characteristics, all people bear and obscure the image of God who created them. Racism sinfully rips apart what God has decreed to be one ("Theology and the Problem of Racism," *Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

While both acknowledged Jesus' Jewishness, the essential factor for King and Bonhoeffer was Christ's God-endowed humanity, representing as the "Son of man" all humankind as the one race of God. During his time studying in New York, Bonhoeffer preached that through Christ's cross all human beings have been drawn together, making them one, without respect to the color of their skins. Also for King, the cross is the most compelling revelation of the *imago Dei*, as it mirrors both God's goodness and nonviolent presence in the ethics of the historical Jesus.

**The implications for the church's pursuit** of creaturely solidarity and racial justice lies in seeing that justice, Young observes of King, as a theological attribute primarily and a virtue that human beings can only strive for as the image of God. "No particular racial type, contingent as it is, so totalizes that image as to become God. No racial type can thus claim divine priority over any other. For King, then, both the apotheosis of skin color and the violence it appears to condone on both sides of the color line stem from racist logic" (76).

In our congregation, we discovered that, like Bonhoeffer and King, our task is one of refusal and resistance: refusal to cave in and capitulate to racist logic especially when it appears in the church. Indeed, as both King and Bonhoeffer testified to in their own lives, every Christian must take a stand against it.

And yet the unfortunate reality is that the problem of racism is no less prevalent today than it was in the times of Bonhoeffer and King. Staggering facts such as that African-Americans are incarcerated seven times the rate of white people in the United States, or that African-Americans have double the unemployment rate of whites and have for over 40 years—not to mention other disparities such as access to health care or educational resources—attest to this. But what does this have to do with creation care?

The truth of the matter is that we, in our congregation, recognized that we are not immune to the reach of this systemic racism. We are predominantly white, benefiting from white privilege. And our congregational space is, for the most part, a white space. This impacts both how we understand what creation care looks like and how we do it.

**Mennonite academic and antiracism trainer** Tobin Miller Shearer points out: "At its most basic level, the forces of racism in church and society give white people unearned access to a wide variety of resources, benefits and respect. The lived experience of receiving these assets and coming to expect them as normal is white privilege" ("White Privilege," Third Way Café). Put another way, Shearer notes, "to be white in America is not to have to think about it." And one way white people become antiracist is to become aware of the privileges U.S. society gives us—to acknowledge our white identities and the power and privilege it provides.

And this gets at our earlier assertion regarding whiteness and white space. All space is some kind of space. There is no race-neutral space, including white space (in fact, "neutral" becomes code for "white"). White space is racialized space, and not to experience it that way is another benefit of white privilege. Such denial not only deracializes a racialized context (the product and prerogative of white privilege in a white racist culture and context), but such power denial maintains a sense of our own exceptionalism, which is itself embedded within a larger white exceptionalism in our society. This creates a context where our appeals to creation care can become deflections from our ongoing participation in white racist systems and institutions, leading to what some refer to as "greenwashing" injustice.

If white privilege impacts our commitments to care for creation, how do we do creation care in just, healthy, racism-dismantling ways? First some clarification. Many describe institutional racism as racial prejudice plus systemic or institutional power. The point here is that racism is about the disproportionate distribution of power and not simply about prejudice. This distinction is important because confusing the two confuses strategies and approaches to dismantling racism. One way this happens is focusing on the interpersonal to the exclusion of the systemic. For example, reducing racism to prejudice allows us to believe that the solution to racism is eliminating our personal prejudices, building personal interracial relationships and developing multicultural competencies. All well and good. But this does not address the fundamental issue of power. And this is one reason why we talk about antiracism.

**Antiracism is important** because it attempts to recognize the status quo realities of systemic violence and racism. And while uncomfortable to some because of its "negative" connotation, antiracism offers a corrective to "positive" language that does not fully recognize these realities. Exclusively positive language gives too much to the status quo. It is too optimistic and does not take seriously enough the task of refusal and resistance with which Bonhoeffer and King challenge us. We must apply a critical approach. Otherwise, our attempts at alternatives will too often default to the status quo without even realizing it. This is the challenge of systemic and institutional racism. And this is the challenge for our creation care. How are we doing creation care in ways that attend to these persistent structural forces?

An antiracist approach to creation care will … stop placing toxic dumps in African-American communities, spraying pesticides on fields in which migrant farmworkers labor, military testing and pollution near Native American reservations and exporting toxic processes and products to the global South.

**As a congregation, we did not discover** some step-by-step plan for this. The reality is that there is no established plan to follow. But if we are to pursue a creation care ethic of antiracism for the church, one place to begin is by asking critical questions: Who benefits from our creation care? Who is comforted or discomforted by this? Who is taking risks in this and at whose cost? And at a deeper level, who gets to determine what creation care looks like? Do we need to question the category of creation care itself as an expression of our white privilege? If our commitments and practices of creation care serve to deflect rather than move us to address directly the persistence of racism in our congregations and communities—and purge it as King and Bonhoeffer challenge us to do—then unfortunately it becomes just another expression of white privilege that replicates racist patterns and relationships.

**Environmental racism refers** to the disproportionate impact of environmental contamination in communities of color, racial discrimination in developing and implementing environmental policy and the lack of people of color in the leadership of the environmental movement. An antiracist approach to creation care will not only identify but prioritize efforts to stop placing toxic dumps in African-American communities, spraying pesticides on fields in which migrant farmworkers labor, military testing and pollution near Native American reservations and exporting corporations' toxic processes and products to the Global South (see "Environmental Racism: An Ecumenical Study Guide" by the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA).

Another example of both local and intersectional engagement is an antiracist creation care approach that values both community gardens and the pressing needs for jobs in urban neighborhoods. Or as our creation care moves us toward local food economies, our antiracism will move us to attend to what some have observed as the prevailing whiteness of community food, where white bodies stick together making food space exclusive. Geographer Rachel Slocum has observed that "community food thrives on a culture of food that has been made white" ("Whiteness, Space and Alternative Food Practice," *Geoforum*, 38.3). She points out that the physical clustering of white bodies, for example in farmers' markets, "reinforces those connections among property, privilege and paler skin." But it does not have to, she argues. The importance of identifying and understanding the racialization of space mentioned above lies in its utility to name and transform that space into something better.

All space is some kind of space. There is no race-neutral space, including white space (in fact "neutral" becomes code for "white").

**For us white folks** who are fairly comfortable with creation care, this work must be antiracist precisely because it discomforts us. If we are to be mindful of the possibility that our efforts at creation care can become expressions of white privilege, replicating racist patterns and relationships, the pursuit of creaturely solidarity becomes vital. And as we hear in Luke's Gospel about the encounter of two travelers on their way to Emmaus with the risen Christ (Luke 24:13-35), we are reminded that this is a sacramental task. We best bear and recognize the *imago* we know intimately in Christ not when we teach or preach or even when we proclaim the prophets but when we walk together, take risks together, break bread together and extend the hospitality we have been taught by Christ.—*Timothy Seidel, a member of Community Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., is pursuing doctoral studies in international relations with a focus on peacebuilding and conflict resolution.*

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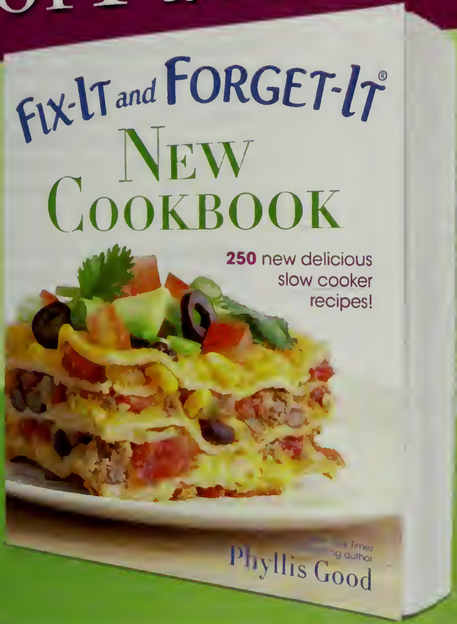

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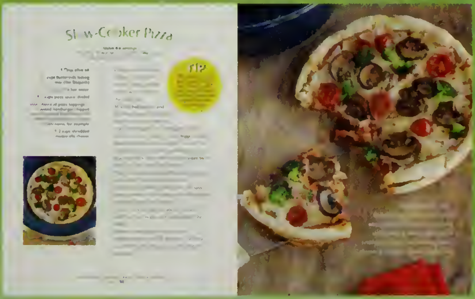

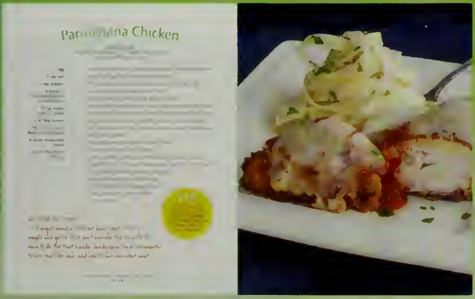

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### CALENDAR

**Eighth Street Mennonite Church**, Goshen, Ind., invites friends and former attendees to help ***celebrate its centennial year throughout 2013.*** A Body That Lives serves as a theme for the stories of people with vision and courage who influenced and guided the church's ministry through its 100 years to the present time. Centennial themes began in February, will culminate during August and end in November with worship and a congregational meal. Beginning in February, to coincide with its founding in February 1913, the congregation has heard stories of men and women who contributed to its genesis and century of life. These "Moments in Time" serve to inform and inspire, and can be found on the 8th Street website (see below). The centennial celebrations will conclude on Nov. 24 with worship, communion and the traditional 8th Street Thanksgiving Dinner. Please check the website at www.8thstmennonite.org for additional information.

### WORKERS

**Martin, Anthony**, was licensed as pastor at Meckville Mennonite Church, Bethel, Pa., on Sept. 8.

**Martin, Kelly**, was licensed as associate pastor at Goodville Mennonite Church, Goodville, Pa., on Sept. 25.

### OBITUARIES

**Alderfer, Helen Wade**, 94, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 5. Spouse: Edwin Stover Alderfer (deceased). Parents: Clark and Mary Graber Conrad Wade. Children: Ann Alderfer Kauffman, Faith Alderfer Summer, Mary Alderfer Snyder, Amy Alderfer Bell, Eric; four grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 12 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Brubaker, Maurice S.**, 77, State College, Pa., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Carolyn Horst Brubaker. Parents: Adin and Huldah Brubaker. Children: Cynthia J. Brubaker, Rodney; two grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 24 at University Mennonite Church, State College.

**Critchfield, Earla Jean Frey**, 84, Hesston, Kan., died Sept. 17. Spouse: Hershel Critchfield (deceased). Spouse: Richard L. Schmidt (deceased). Parents: Edward and Augusta Neufeld Frey. Children: Robert Schmidt, Darrell Schmidt, Norman Critchfield; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 21 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Frey, James J.**, 86, Pettisville, Ohio, died Oct. 6. Spouse: Emagene "Jean" Short Frey (deceased). Parents: Harvey and Bertha Short Frey. Children: Bernard "Barney," Ken, Becky Peabody, Charles, Janet Frey; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 10 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**Godshall, Eva L. Halteman**, 91, Souderton, Pa., died Sept. 17. Spouse: Ernie D. Godshall. Parents: Melvin and Laura Halteman. Children: Ernie, Jr., Kenny, Ronald, Sandy; nine grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; 14 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 20 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

**Hamm, Andy**, 77, Altona, Manitoba, died Sept. 1. Spouse: Margaret Hamm. Parents: Andreas and Margaret Hamm. Children: Jim, Nancy; four grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 7 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Hess, John David**, 92, Lancaster, Pa., died June 25, of kidney failure. Spouse: Arlene H. Metzler Hess. Parents: Harry G. and Mary Buckwalter Hess. Children: Susan Guengerich, Jean Horst, Fred; eight grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 13 at Landis Valley Christian Fellowship, Lancaster.

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**Hiebert, Leroy Vernon**, 80, Elbing, Kan., died Aug. 14, following complication of a heart procedure and car accident. Parents: Gustav H. and Maria A. Buller Hiebert. Sisters: Lorena and Pete Klaassen, Elda Ruth Hiebert; five nephews. Memorial service: Aug. 20 at Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing.

**Hooley, Almeda Troyer**, 91, West Liberty, Ohio, died April 20. Spouse: Dr. Paul E. Hooley. Parents: Martin and Katie Troyer. Children: Steve, Barbara Hooley, Joyce Hooley-Gingrich, Ron, Mary Louise Hooley Carlisle; eight grandchildren. Memorial service: May 4 at Jennings Farley Funeral Home, West Liberty.

**Keeler, Thelma Pearl Freed**, 86, Telford, Pa., died Sept. 8. Spouse: Alvin W. Keeler (deceased). Parents: Clarence and Alma Gehman Freed. Children: Terry L., Timothy S.; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 12 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

**Kurtz, Vera N. Yoder**, 94, Plain City, Ohio, and Smithville, Ohio, died July 21 of a stroke. Spouse: Irvin C. Kurtz (deceased). Parents: Alpheus and Elnora Horst Yoder. Children: Pearl Sommers, Marvin, James, Nancy Yoder; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 25 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

**Klassen, Harold G.**, 82, Hesston, Kan., died Sept. 17. Spouse: Joanne Elizabeth Nikkel Klassen. Parents: Gustav and Martha Nickel Klassen. Children: Thomas, Bruce; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 21 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Lantz, Mary Jane Blough**, 93, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 6. Spouse: M. Clifford Lantz (deceased). Parents: Henry D. and Salome Stutzman Blough. Children: Susan Jane Lantz, Catherine Ellen Miller, Nancy Ann Eggers, Stephen Morell Lantz, John Thomas Lantz, David Blough Lantz; nine grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 9 in Goshen.

**Mast, Elmer A.**, 92, Gordonville, Pa., died Aug. 21 of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Barbara Stoltzfus Mast. Parents: Amos K. and Fannie Kennel Mast. Children: Linda Semke, Clair, Shirley Mast, Dorothy Richer, Elvin; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 26 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

**Mathys, Arthur Lewis**, 93, Castorland, N.Y., died Oct. 3. Spouse: Mary Ella Lehman Mathys. Parents: John and Barbara Martin Mathys. Children: Stanley, Judy Hodkinson, Linda Deveines; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 8 at Adirondack Funeral Home, Groghan, N.Y.

**Miller, Grace Metzler**, 102, Harrisonburg, Va., died Aug. 9 of pneumonia. Spouse: Paul N. Miller (deceased). Parents: Isaac K. and Laura Durr Metzler. Children: Carl, Edwin, Helen Lampan; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. A memorial service will be scheduled in Harrisonburg at a later date.

**Moser, A. John**, 80, Bluffton, Ohio, died Sept. 13. Spouse: Mary Anne Bertsche Moser. Parents: Ezra and Lena Boehr Moser. Children: David, Karen Lee, Mark, Chris; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 21 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Moyer, Jodelle "Jody" Detweiler**, 67, Sellersville, Pa., died Sept. 28. Spouse: R. Bruce Moyer. Parents: Samuel M. and Bertha Labs Detweiler. Children: Cheramie Lutz, Caleb; five grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 5 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa

**Rutt, Helen Althouse**, 82, Landisville, Pa., died Sept. 13. Spouse: Clarence Rutt. Parents: Wilmer B. and Martha Histand Althouse. Children: Carol Jeanne Landis, Sue Glick, Richard, J. Steven; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 17 at Landisville Mennonite Church.

**Stutzman, Paul E.**, 80, Wood River, Neb., died Aug. 28. Spouse: Dorothy Stutzman. Parents: Clarence D. and Ethel Jantzi Stutzman. Children: Allan, Michael, Bradley, Lori Kennel; 17 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 31 at Wood River Mennonite Church.

**Thiessen, Albert D.**, 90, Butterfield, Minn., died Oct. 7. Spouse: Matilda J. Duerksen Thiessen (deceased). Parents: David H. and Elizabeth J. Harder Thiessen. Children: Ivan, Darwin, Lauren Thiessen; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 12 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minn.

**Waltner, Martha Fast**, 92, Freeman, S.D., died Sept. 4. Spouse: Homer E. Waltner (deceased). Parents: Isaac and Aganetha Unruh Fast. Children: Everett, Geraldine Butkus, Isaac; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 9 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

**Wogomon, Edith J. Klopfenstein**, 84, Wakarusa, Ind., died Aug. 28. Spouse: Kenneth L. Wogomon (deceased). Parents: James and Mabel Eicher Klopfenstein. Children: Joan Beck, Martha Ramer, Denny, Don; 17 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 31 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**Yoder, Jay Warren**, 94, West Liberty, Ohio, died Aug. 9 following a stroke. Spouse: Ruth Weber Yoder. Parents: Dan C. and Maude Allgyer Yoder. Children: Edward, Keith, Karl; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 24 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty.

## RESOURCES

**From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church** by Wes Granberg-Michaelson (Eerdmans, 2013, $20) explores the consequences of the shift in the center of gravity for world Christianity from Europe and North America to a point near Timbuktu in Africa. Specifically, it considers the efforts to build Christian unity in the face of new and challenging divisions.

**Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization** by S. Roy Kaufman (Wipf and Stock, 2013, $31) reads the Bible through the lenses of rural communities, which are being systematically dismantled by forces of urban civilization around the world. It argues that local, face-to-face communities, both rural and urban, along with traditional cultures of all stripes, are God's chosen instruments for the subversive, nonviolent disarming of urban civilization and the healing of God's earth.

**Perennial Wisdom for the Spiritually Independent: Sacred Teachings—Annotated and Explained**, annotation by Rami Shapiro (SkyLight Paths, 2013, $16.99), combines wit, irony, honesty and luminous mystical understanding, designed for those not tied to a certain tradition.

**The Oral Gospel Tradition** by James D.G. Dunn (Eerdmans, 2013, $45) argues that more consideration needs to be given to the oral use and transmission of the Jesus tradition as a major factor in giving the Synoptic tradition its enduring character.

**Blush: A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World** by Shirley Showalter (Herald Press, 2013, $15.99) is a memoir by the former Goshen (Ind.) College president. She grew up in a plain-dressing, plain-speaking Mennonite farm family in Lancaster County, Pa., and was named for Shirley Temple, a movie star she was forbidden to watch. See review on page 53.

**The Fehrs: Four Centuries of Mennonite Migration** by Arlette Kouwenhoven (WINCO Publishing, 2013, $29.95) describes the migration history of 15 generations of Fehrs/DeFehrs who chose a continuous path of migration in their search for the perfect place to live their Mennonite way of life. Though a family chronicle, the story runs parallel to what tens of thousands of Mennonites have experienced.

**The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology** by Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney (BakerAcademic, 2013, $19.99) underscores that Christ offers hope not only through his resurrection but also through his incar-

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**Bethel Mennonite Church** in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is inviting applications for a ***full-time lead pastor*** to commence in summer 2014. We are seeking a person with a strong Anabaptist theology as well as ability to engage the congregation through worship and preaching. This person will have strong administrative skills and be able to work with and lead a multimember pastoral team. Our desire is that the successful candidate, along with the pastoral team, can enable and nurture the gifts of the congregation in order to enhance the overall mission of the church. Pastoral experience along with a Master of Divinity or equivalent is preferred. Please send resumés to jbpeters@shaw.ca or contact Jake Peters at 204-889-5094 for information. For more about Bethel Mennonite Church see: http://bethelmennonite.ca.

***Senior pastor*** (full-time) **Forest Hills Mennonite Church** in Leola, Pa., is seeking a senior pastor to provide leadership to and participate in the Pastoral Leadership Team. Role includes providing spiritual oversight and direction to the life and mission of the congregation. Interested candidates should up-hold Christ-centered Anabaptist theology. Send cover letter and resumé to Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Attn: Search Committee, 100 Quarry Rd., Leola, PA. 17540 or email to fhmc@foresthillschurch.org.

**Eastern Mennonite Seminary** (EMS) and the Eastern Mennonite University invite qualified candidates to apply for a tenure-track, continuing faculty position in ***Christian formation, preaching, and worship***, expected to begin fall 2014. Rank to be determined according to qualifications and experience, assistant professorship strongly preferred. Ph.D., Th.D. or equivalent terminal degree. Track record indicating potential for effective teaching and scholarship. To apply, send a letter of application and curriculum vitae by Nov. 15, 2013, through email attachment to Michael A. King, VP and Seminary Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, michael.king@emu.edu or mail to 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Application review begins immediately; candidates prioritized for further conversation to be notified by Dec. 31, 2013, and the search will remain open until the position is filled. For more information, visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources. EOE

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**Eastern Mennonite University** is seeking applicants for a ***chemical hygiene officer/lab technician*** in the Department of Biology/Chemistry. Primary responsibilities include providing lab use and chemical safety training, annual review and revision to the Chemical Hygiene Plan, laboratory safety and emergency response, supervision of work-study students, equipment maintenance, assistance with course laboratory exercises as needed, and greenhouse and arboretum maintenance and care. Bachelor's degree in a field of science required. Certification of or degree in safety desirable. Submit application, resumé and three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

***Food services director***. **College Mennonite Church** seeks a full-time person to continue the food services ministry at CMC. Prior experience in food service is required. This position requires regular attendance at CMC in order to perform essential job duties. Contact Willie Kanagy at 535-7262 or willie@collegemennonite.org or Geof Landis at 831-3613 or geof@mennotrav.com. EOE

**Camp Friedenswald,** Cassopolis, Mich., supported by Central District Conference, is seeking a visionary, motivated leader to serve full time as ***executive director.*** Responsibilities include (1) overseeing operations, (2) staffing and programming, (3) aptitude for fund-raising. Qualifications include strong skills in communication, public relations, organization and experience in fund-raising. Send resumés with references to Phoebe Graber at pwgraber@gmail.com.

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# Lessons from tomato plants

**Jon Heinly** is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School. He can be reached at jheinly@lancasterconference.org.

Some people find it strange that I enjoy eating tomatoes like they're apples, but it happens to be one of my favorite foods. Sadly, I'm nearing the end of the harvest of my delicious Purple Haze heirloom tomatoes. This particular growing season has been spectacular, and the produce has been enormous and bursting with flavor, so I've had an abundance of these delicious snacks.

But it wasn't just the size and juiciness of the tomatoes that made them especially delicious this year. There was an additional factor. For the first time, I saved seeds from a previous year's heirloom tomato and raised them from seeds to mature plants. Last fall, I carefully extracted seeds from a tomato, meticulously rinsed and dried them, and kept them through the winter. As the first signs of spring broke through the winter, I watched a few online instructional videos, planted the seeds in starter soil and waited for the first green of seedlings to break through the surface.

**The tiny plants grew quickly** at first, with each day marking visible changes. Eventually, I potted them so that the roots could expand and grow. Then as the days grew warmer, I slowly introduced them into the wind and direct sunlight of the outdoors. But each evening, I took them back in so that the cold of the spring nights would not kill the fragile plants. Eventually, when they were sufficiently hardened to the natural elements, I put the strongest plants into the ground. Suddenly, they didn't seem so large. Instead of being the sturdy plants that had started as tiny seedlings, they seemed vulnerable in the great space of the garden.

As I watered and watched the plants to look for continued growth, I instead saw yellowing leaves that began falling off. Since it was my first time growing the plants from seed, I assumed I had done something wrong and feared they would soon die from whatever mistake I had made. However, after a few tenuous days, new, bright green growth pushed out, and the plants reached higher. The growth was slow but visible. Clearly the plants were becoming stronger and more deeply rooted.

After weeks of the plants maturing, the first flowers appeared. For a tomato lover, the time between the appearance of the first flower and a mature red (or in this case purple) tomato is excruciating. But after more waiting, I finally experienced the fruits of my labor. How sweet they were!

As it turned out, the extended process of nurturing these plants was therapeutic for me. It served as a metaphor that I needed. Like growing tomato plants, sometimes life seems fruitless. Sometimes our faith seems more full of questions and doubts than full of new life and visible growth. Like plants introduced to the natural elements of the outdoors, painful and difficult circumstances can feel like they will break us.

At one point this summer, we went through a stretch of unseasonably cold weather, and the tomatoes stopped ripening. This reminded me of times when it feels like my own growth and fruitfulness feels plateaued or stagnant. There are many stages in the development of a tomato plant that are vital to its fruitfulness that don't provide any immediate reward to the gardener. Likewise, there are important stages to our own growth as people that are deep but not particularly spectacular. Developing strong roots is invisible, much like the development of character.

> Developing strong roots is invisible, much like the development of character.

**Perhaps it is no surprise** that gardening and tending to these plants spoke to me and became a metaphor for life and faith. After all, the teachings of Jesus are full of agricultural metaphors—scattering seed, fruitless fig trees, pruning grape vines and tiny mustard seeds. There is much to these organic processes that parallels our lives. As I consider this, part of what I take from my tomato plant experience is a more patient and gracious understanding about life, faith and character. It applies to the people around me, but also to my own life.

Waiting for growth and fruit can be agonizing, whether it is in the life of someone else or within me. But sometimes there is more to the story than what we see. One of the beautiful things about growing a plant is that, even with all the work and time I invest, the miracle of the life and growth of a plant is beyond my control. So maybe it is OK if I need to trust the same source of life for myself and for others as I anxiously wait to see the fruit I long for. TM

# Amish romance, memoirs, Natives

It'll soon be time to think about Christmas gifts. And what better gift than a good book.

*Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels* by Valerie Weaver-Zercher (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $24.95) is an everything you wanted to know about Amish romances and more. Weaver-Zercher combines research, literary theory and interviews with readers, publishers and authors to explore why this genre is so popular. An excerpt appeared in our April issue.

*Blush: A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World* by Shirley Hershey Showalter (Herald Press, 2013, $15.99) is a memoir by the former professor of English and later president of Goshen (Ind.) College. With graceful prose and a fine use of detail, Showalter recounts her origins and her childhood in Lancaster County, Pa. She captures the tension between her insular Mennonite upbringing and the allure of the wider world.

*Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African* by Lamin Sanneh (Eerdmans, 2012, $24) is a fascinating memoir of Sanneh's growing up in a polygamous household in The Gambia, attending a Muslim boarding school and the impact of Helen Keller's autobiography on his devotion to education and faith. Sanneh converted from Islam to Christianity and later pursued academia. He is now professor of missions and world Christianity at Yale University. His story is detailed, compassionate and inspiring.

*Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice and Life Together*, edited by Steve Heinrichs (Herald Press, 2013, $21.99), collects essays and poetry from a variety of sources—both traditional and Christian, Native and non-Native—that address the destruction of Indigenous cultures and land by non-Native settlers and the different perspectives these groups represent.

Heinrichs calls this "a Jonah text" that speaks "a word to, against and for the dominant settler-colonial culture in North America." Part of that call to "repent, resist, do something" relates to the ways that dominant culture has devastated the planet's ecosystem. Those courageous enough to read it with an open posture will find new insights and challenges to their usual way of thinking.

*A Peaceable Hope: Contesting Violent Eschatology in New Testament Narratives* by David J. Neville (BakerAcademic, 2013, $24.99) explores this discrepancy in the New Testament: "although the canonical Gospels present a fairly uniform picture of Jesus as an advocate of peace and practitioner of nonretaliation, certain texts within these same Gospels and in other parts of the New Testament apparently anticipate future arrival, or *parousia*, of Jesus in the guise of a violent avenger."

Neville looks at these contradictory texts honestly while arguing for a "*shalom* hermeneutic" to "complement the church's earlier interpretive rules of faith and love."

While quite academic, this important book is worth the effort. Neville concludes, "Nothing short of a peaceable hope, such as one finds in the vision of a new Jerusalem, does justice to what the story of Jesus reveals about God's will and way in the world."

More accessible if less groundbreaking is *Jesus and Paul Before Christianity: Their World and Work in Retrospect* by V. George Shillington (Cascade Books, 2011, $27). Shillington, who teaches at Canadian Mennonite University, seeks to let Jesus and Paul act and speak out of their own contexts.

This is a good introduction to the topic. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

## FILM REVIEWS

**Gravity** (PG-13) is an extraordinary film that you experience as much as watch. It follows two surviving astronauts from a damaged Space Shuttle as they try to make it back to Earth. The film combines wrenching suspense while exploring themes of meaning. Every aspect—writing, acting, cinematography—make this the best film thus far of 2013.—*Gordon Houser*

**Captain Phillips** (PG-13) is about the 2009 hijacking of the U.S. container ship Maersk Alabama by a crew of Somali pirates. Although the real Phillips is not the hero the film portrays, the film is both a pulse-pounding thriller and a portrait of the economic results of globalization. When poor countries like Somalia cannot provide a stable economy, piracy is one consequence. Tom Hanks, who plays Phillips, is a terrific actor.—*gh*

**Prisoners** (R) is an intense film about a father who goes to extreme measures to try to find his missing 6-year-old daughter after she and a friend are kidnapped. The film shows the moral ambiguity of its characters, with one exception. It's certainly not for everyone's tastes.—*gh*

## DVD REVIEW

**The House I Live In** (NR) is an informative and heartbreaking documentary from 2012 about the war on drugs and its consequences. The film uses historical footage and many interviews to explore the judicial system that has filled our prisons with nonviolent offenders whose crime is often selling drugs. Because of harsh sentencing requirements established by Congress during the Reagan and Clinton administrations (and carried on by others), judges are handicapped in handing out sentences to those found guilty of drug offenses. Interviewee David Simon, creator of *The Wire*, says, "They might as well say, Let's get rid of the bottom 15 percent of the population." That's the effect of this so-called war on drugs. It destroys individual lives; it destroys communities. It costs all of us.—*gh*

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# God sighting at Four Seasons

*Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.*
—Genesis 1:29 TNIV

In early September, I visited the corporate offices of Four Seasons Produce, based in Ephrata, Pa. I stopped by to see my friend Nelson Longenecker, who serves as vice president of business innovation at Four Seasons as well as vice chair of the board of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA).

From the onset of my visit, I observed that leaders of this company take seriously God's call to be stewards of God's creation. As stewards, they cooperate with God in the production and distribution of food for the earth's inhabitants. They handle produce—fruits and vegetables—from many parts of the world and distribute it throughout the eastern United States.

The most visible part of God's work at Four Seasons, of course, is the creation itself. Without the creation of the world with its vegetation, there'd be nothing for them to distribute. It's instructive that the writers and arrangers of Scripture put God as the subject of an active verb in the very first sentence of the Bible—"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." That's one reason I value the term "creation care" as a way of speaking about environmental concerns; it emphasizes stewardship—cooperation with God by caring for the planet God created for human enjoyment.

Four Seasons reflects God's work by emphasizing and building on the organic nature of food. In fact, half their produce is certified as "organic," a huge percentage increase over the past decade. Because of their support of organic farmers, Four Seasons has become their distributor of choice in the Pennsylvania area. They also support other local farmers engaged in small-scale production. The closest farmer raises produce just across the fence from the plant; he loads his wagon in the field and brings it across the parking lot to the warehouse.

Because the company imports produce from places as distant as New Zealand, they also have given thought to the carbon footprints left by various means of transportation.

I was surprised to learn that in the transportation of produce, the biggest carbon footprint of all is generally left by the customer driving to and from the store to buy groceries. That's because the amount of fossil fuel consumed is so high in proportion to the amount of food that is moved. I also learned that sometimes local food production, especially in greenhouses, can consume a higher percentage of fossil fuel than shipping long distances by boat, which is by far the most efficient way to move large quantities of food.

Four Seasons cooperates with God in the care of the earth's resources in a variety of ways, most visibly in energy conservation. They were recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency as the first warehouse in the country to be awarded the Energy Star. Through rainwater harvesting and enhanced cooling water treatment, they have dramatically reduced the need for public well water. Although the company is growing, they cut back 24 percent on the amount of water needed in 2012 from a similar time in 2007, saving 1.6 million gallons. Through "mixed stream" recycling, they divert 90 percent of the normal waste from landfills.

I also saw God at work in the care for employees—whom they call associates—at this company. Surveys demonstrate that associates feel like their work is significant, that they are making a difference in the world. The Spirit of God enables a cooperative approach that values people at every level in the company.

In my visit to Four Seasons, I was encouraged to see people cooperating with God in the marketplace. I can't think of a better way for Christian faith to get down to business.

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

The writers and arrangers of scripture put God as the subject of an active verb in the very first sentence of the Bible.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# Beyond tokenism

Everett J. Thomas

According to Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA, our denomination has moved beyond tokenism in the inclusion of underrepresented racial/ethnic members.

"We have arrived at a critical mass," she said at a gathering of 60 Mennonite leaders of color last January. "Can we now produce systemic changes?" (see March issue).

Elizabeth's pronouncement was right, and her question was right. In September, she dramatized the change by first asking all people of color to stand at the joint meeting of the Governance Council and Executive Board. She then asked all women to stand.

"We can see how far we have come," she said, "and how far we have to go."

But in an aside, Executive Board member Charlotte Hardt said something prescient to me.

"Yes, we have all these women and people of color," she said, "but we're still doing business the same old ways. Maybe the women and people of color who make it into the system are just those who can operate in Anglo ways."

> If we really have moved beyond tokenism with the leaders of color now in place, we white leaders will step back, sit down and listen.

Although many leaders worked at dismantling racism in the church over the years, an event nearly two decades ago laid the foundation for much of what has been done since. In 1994, the "Restoring Our Sight" conference in Chicago, led by Regina Shands Stoltzfus and Tobin Miller Shearer, planted the seeds for what later would bloom as the Damascus Road antiracism training provided by Mennonite Central Committee.

Damascus Road training taught us several important things:

- Most of us white people swim unaware in a sea of privilege.
- While individuals may experience the scales of privilege falling from their eyes in a personal Damascus Road conversion, real and substantial change happens only when systems are transformed.
- When organizations and institutions begin to change, racism mutates into forms that are less obvious and less easy to confront.

One of the most helpful tools developed for the antiracism training was a six-step continuum that described what each stage of positive change would look like. This continuum was helpful because no institution or organization can skip any stage. And each stage brings with it a new set of challenges requiring solutions not employed in earlier stages.

So Elizabeth and Charlotte are both right. We need systemic change in Mennonite Church USA, and the current systems have not changed much. Charlotte may also be right that the reason women and people of color must operate in our current Anglo structures is because there has not yet been a deeply shared vision or the will and resolve to change the systems.

So what systemic changes should we make?

Damascus Road training says the first people to whom we ask this question are those most hurt by white privilege. So we ask our many leaders of color (that "critical mass" as Elizabeth called it) to speak to the issue first.

Of course, not all leaders of color will have the same point of view or suggestions. But if we really have moved beyond tokenism with the leaders now in place, we white leaders will step back, sit down and listen as new voices discern what God's Spirit would have for Mennonite Church USA in the future.—*ejt*

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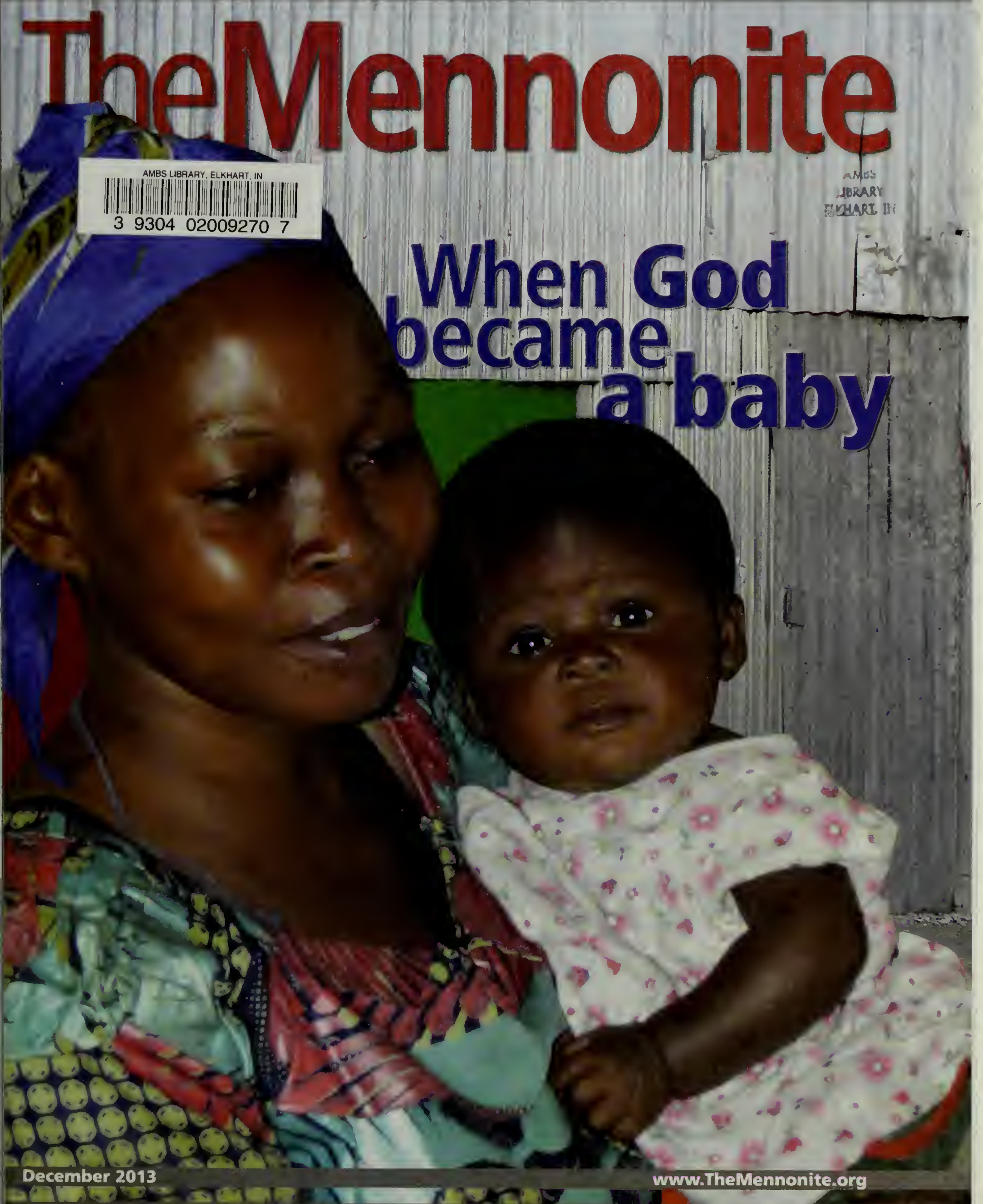

## When God became a baby

December 2013

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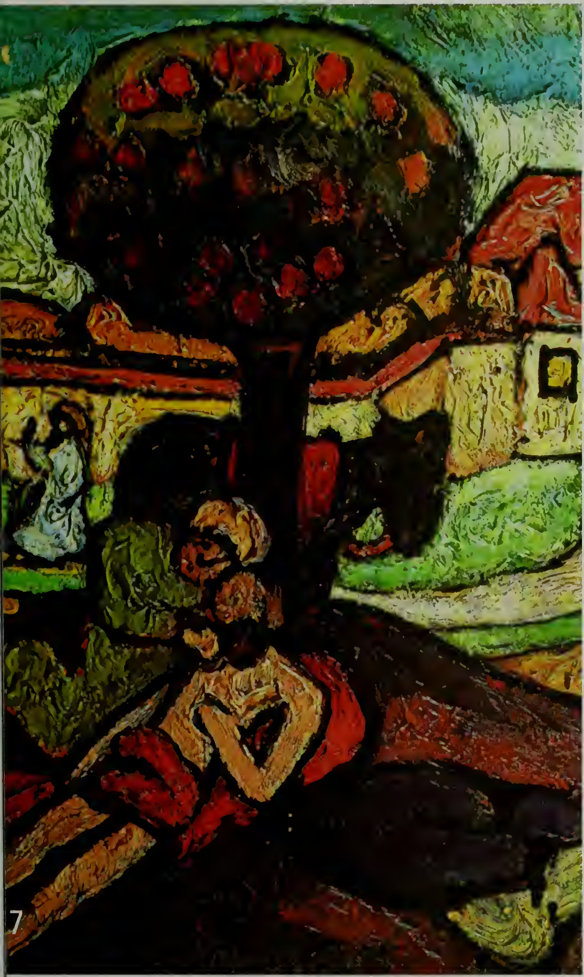

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**Rohrer was gift to the church**

I was deeply saddened by the news that Raymond Rohrer, 83, of Lancaster, Pa., passed away on Oct. 26. Not only was he a dear friend but one of those overlooked, unsung treasures of Mennonite Church USA. The obituary and news release give the "facts" of his passing but don't do justice to telling his story (neither does this letter).

I first met Raymond in 1984, when I was hired as the Director of Deaf Ministries at the former Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM). Here I was, a young upstart, fresh out of graduate school. I was not a member of the deaf community, could barely "speak" their language and had much to learn about this community. Yet naively I had accepted the call to serve in this leadership role. Should not Raymond have been offered this position?

Over the six years I worked at MBM, he humbly and lovingly helped steer my well-intentioned but sometimes misguided attempts at "helping the deaf." Over the years since, I've learned much from the deaf community and have remained in contact with him, his wife and the Mennonite deaf community. He consistently remained a quiet, wise man of faith nurturing the spirit of many deaf (and hearing) people. He did this in spite of having little access to the resources available to most (hearing) pastors in the church.

When I would become angry at the injustices and inequality (between deaf and hearing people) in our denomination, he would calmly "listen," then go about the work God had called him to. He never expressed bitterness toward the church but always hopes and joys for this imperfect bride of Christ.

He was a precious gift to the Mennonite church and one many did not know. He was a true servant of Christ to both deaf and hearing people. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him. *—Sheila S. Yoder, deaf ministries coordinator, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., and church relations associate, Mennonite Mission Network*

**Thanks to Congo delegation**

We thank all our brothers and sisters from far and near who participated in our ordinations on Sept. 22 in Kinshasa and Oct. 6 in Kalonda ("1,000 Gather in Kinshasa for Ordinations," November). Our gratitude is directed first of all to the Most High,who allowed these events to take place and go well. We say thank you to our church, Communaute Mennonite au Congo, for having lifted the ban on ordaining women.

Our thanks extend to Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Women, Mennonite Mission Network and Western District Conference for sending representatives to Congo. We also thank all our friends in Canada and the United States for your letters of encouragement, your prayers and your gifts.

The delegation representing you at our ordinations testifies to Psalm 133:1-3, which begins, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

The presence of this delegation, representing all our Mennonite brothers and sisters across the world, confirmed the unity and love we have in Christ and the continuity of the missionary work in Congo.

We continue to solicit your prayers, that we may be permitted to carry out this great, divine task.*—Fabienne Kidinda Ngombe, Sidonie Falanga Swana and Bercy Kalote Mundedi, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo*

I'm very glad to write to Mennonite Church USA for the first time. May the peace and grace of our Lord be with you. I thank you and Mennonite Mission Network for sending women pastors to celebrate with us as we ordained women in Congo. Pray for all women pastors.

Don't forget to educate women and help them provide for their families. Remember the people who are starving in Congo. Continue to send others to work alongside us.—*Anastasie Nyange, secretary of Communaute Mennonite au Congo (Mennonite Church of Congo)*

**Why article about military chaplain?**
I'm a little confused by the inclusion of "Seminary Alum Ministers to Soldiers in Afghanistan" (October). The only hint of irony that reminded me I wasn't reading a Southern Baptist periodical was the term "peace-and-justice theology." Is there any evidence it has any influence on prospective military chaplains? It's unclear whether the article is a celebration or a lamentation. I apologize if my rhetoric sounds harsh, but the bottom-line raison d'etre for military chaplains is to reassure any troops having a moral crisis about killing and returning them to duty.—*Scott Smith, Greensboro, N.C.*

**EMS leaders respond**
Eastern Mennonite Seminary regularly seeks to affirm core commitments and honor those whose convictions differ. For instance, Mennonite students who affirm adult baptism study with United Methodist students who affirm infant baptism.

Soldiers are often tools of decision-makers operating at levels far above them. This is one reason some Mennonites pair peace commitments with care for traumatized veterans. Where, then, is the line between caring for soldiers after service as opposed to while in service? This is tricky business. Mennonites risk turning military personnel into enemies we're allowed to hate. The article on Jacobs refrained from doing so by nonjudgmentally telling his story. We also must ever remember the battlefield opponents nations train soldiers to see as enemies.

I hear Scott Smith inviting the latter awareness in future articles, and I concur. I hope we can be a seminary within which those who hold different—even "enemy"—perspectives can learn from each other. I also want EMS to be primally grounded in Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings of Jesus' way. *—Michael A. King, dean, Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

**What about Yoder's family?**
I have been distressed and saddened by the lack of thought or care for John Howard Yoder's family during this time of renewed attention to his personal failings. I was fortunate enough to become friends with one of his children many years ago in college and was welcomed into the extended family as well. I have many fond memories of my hours with the Yoders and have continued to be in contact with them.

I recognize that there are still people who remain wounded and in need of continued healing. But I am unclear as to how this renewed public attention could be helpful. I speak as the survivor of childhood sexual abuse—from which it has taken many years in and out of both therapy and the Mennonite church to achieve full healing. I have only recently found that the final key to my healing was forgiveness of myself—not in the sense that I was "at fault" but that I needed to recognize and forgive the vulnerability of myself as a young girl.

I imagine that self-forgiveness may be a missing piece for many of the women who have not yet achieved healing themselves, and perhaps there is a sense that John Howard was not

*(Continued on page 54)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

The Christ-child as a living, breathing, in-the-flesh infant is the theme that emerged through three pieces in this issue.

"The Almighty Creator took shape as a mewling, hungry baby born to a Jewish girl in an animal trough in an obscure backwater village in the outskirts of the Roman Empire millennia ago," says Gordon Houser on page 12. "We tend to mouth this belief—or merely think about it briefly once a year—without considering quite how outlandish, how radical such a belief is."

In his column (page 8), Isaac Villegas says, "The incarnation of God in Jesus means that God cannot forsake us because God has chosen human life as God's life."

The editorial (page 56) notes that it is God's body lying in the manger and describes the significance for the first Christians that this was a son: "In that time and culture, a man's 'essence' continued to live on in his son, especially a firstborn son. … The all-powerful, all-loving Creator of the universe was embodied in that tiny little boy, the essence of God."

The majority—21 to be exact—of the articles and columns, are either written by women or women are the subject of the pieces.

These include Marty Lehman's happy memories as an Amish child when her culture celebrated Christmas but did not observe Advent (page 30).

"Now, as an adult, what I value most about the Christmas season is Advent. … Advent allows us to slow down."

On page 31, Paula Killough and Sandy Miller describe the great joy in the Congo when the last of three Mennonite groups changed its policies and ordained women to pastoral ministry. They quote one woman, Charly Kasha, as saying, "Why not me?"—*Editor*

## Western District hosts conversation on church and homosexuality

NEWTON, Kan.—More than 130 people signed up for the Western District Conference (WDC) Reference Council with the theme of "The Church and Homosexuality: A Conversation that can Hold us Together," held Oct. 26 at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton.

The goal of this symposium, planned and led by the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force of WDC, was that Christians with profound ethical disagreement engage in respectful conversation and theological reflection.

Participants mentioned repeatedly two insights by the participants. One was "the grace of uncertainty," offered by Keith Graber Miller, Goshen (Ind.) College professor.

He encouraged participants to remember that we all see through a glass darkly in this life. Therefore it is best to offer our certainties with a good measure of humility.

A second often-noted insight was offered by David Boshart, conference minister for Central Plains Conference.

"Jesus demonstrated special concern for those rejected in society or who were living in a state of alienation," he said. "So should the church. But Jesus did not practice radical inclusion. He practiced radical hospitality."

Participants said they were grateful for the open, honest conversation. Many hoped for this kind of conversation in their congregations.

Many noted that there are other sexual matters that also need the church's attention including pornography, the exploitation of sex, premarital sex, rape and healing ministries for those wounded by sexual violence.—*WDC*

Photo provided

## Clinton Frame Mennonite celebrates 150 years

On Oct. 13, during the first worship hour, people meet in the sanctuary of Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, near Goshen, Ind., with men sitting on the left and women on the right, to hear stories and sing through the years, celebrating the congregation's 150th anniversary. Wes Bontreger, former member at Clinton Frame and now pastor at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, spoke about how Christ is building his church. Terry Diener, lead pastor at Clinton Frame, responded.—*Diane Lockwood*

## Resources available for World Fellowship Sunday

BOGOTÁ, Colombia—World Fellowship Sunday takes place on a Sunday close to Jan. 21, the date of the first adult baptism in Switzerland in 1525. On that Sunday Mennonite World Conference (MWC) invites Anabaptist congregations around the world to take the time to pray for each other, worship together in spirit, using shared worship materials, and fellowship together by connecting with other congregations across conferences and countries.

MWC also invites a special offering to be taken for MWC. One way to think about this offering is to invite each member of the congregation to contribute the cost of one lunch in their own community to help support the networks and resources of our global Anabaptist church family.

For more information, go to: www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-fellowship-sunday.—*MWC*

## First Deaf Mennonite pastor dies at 83

Raymond Eby Rohrer, 83, of Ronks Pa., died Oct. 26 at Landis Homes in Lancaster, Pa. He was the first ordained Deaf pastor in the Mennonite Church.

Born in Smoketown, Pa., he was the son of the late Israel D. and Edna Eby Rohrer and stepson of the late Lydia Weaver Rohrer. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth King Rohrer.

He graduated from Philadelphia School for the Deaf and worked as a linotype printer for 25 years. His spiritual commitment and gifts for ministry were noticed by people around him, and he accepted a call to pastoring.

He was called to First Deaf Mennonite Church in Lancaster in 1973 and pastored there for 22 years. He also served as interim pastor for Orville (Ohio) Deaf Mennonite Church and Frederick (Md.) Deaf Church of the Brethren.

Prior to becoming a pastor, he taught the deaf Sunday school for many years. He started deaf Youth for Christ, deaf youth camp, Deaf Crusade for Christ and a deaf senior citizen group. He served on the boards for several agencies: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services in Lancaster, Anabaptist Deaf

Ministries in Elkhart, Ind., and American Deaf Missions. He was a longtime member of the Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf. *—Sheila Yoder*

## Former president of Mennonite Church of Congo dies

ELKHART, Ind.—Robert Sakayimbo Cibulenu, president of Communauté Mennonite au Congo (Mennonite Church of Congo) from 1987-1995, died Nov. 1. Cibulenu was around 80 years old; the date of his birth is uncertain.

"Pastor Cibulenu was an appreciated advisor and confidant of current church President Komuesa and was not afraid to ask hard questions," said Rod Hollinger-Janzen, executive coordinator of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission.

Cibulenu was also a farmer-entrepreneur who believed that small businesses could benefit Mennonite families and help the church in Congo move toward greater self-reliance.

During the celebration of Mennonite Church of Congo's centennial anniversary last year, Cibulenu made his last great contribution to his beloved church. Despite his failing health, he helped research and write the French version of biographies of Congolese Mennonites, *100 Ans de Mission Mennonite en République Démocratique du Congo* (*100 years of Mennonite Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo*). The English title is *The Jesus Tribe*.*—Mennonite Mission Network*

Bethel College photo

### Member of the year

Laura Jensen, a junior from Everest, Kan., at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., has been named Kansas Member of the Year by the Kansas chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She received the honor Oct. 18 at Fort Hays State University. *—Bethel College*

## Fund-raiser challenges Mark Driscoll to join a CPT delegation

Tyler Tully has organized a fund-raiser that's trying to address the statements of a well-known evangelical preacher.

Mark Driscoll said on Oct. 22 (http://theresurgence.com/2013/10/22/is-god-a-pacifist) that "the Prince of Peace is not a pacifist" or a "pansy." He said that "engaging evil in order to protect others is not evil."

Tully writes that he and others agree but also think the way of Jesus means we engage evil nonviolently, just like Jesus does in the Gospels.

Tully is asking people to invite Driscoll to join a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in places like Colombia, Iraq, Palestine, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the U.S./Mexico borderlands to experience the bold, raw, nonviolent activism of CPTers and their peacemaking partners.

Tully is asking people to donate to this campaign. Go to http://www.crowdrise.com/sendmarkdriscoll/fundraiser/tylertully. "If [Driscoll] doesn't think he is up to the challenge," writes Tully, "we'll take all monies raised and use them for CPT's general scholarship fund. This fund empowers CPT delegates to visit peacemakers around the world who are doing the difficult work of transforming violence and oppression."*—Tyler Tully*

## Goshen College's 91.1 FM The Globe wins trifecta

GOSHEN, Ind.—On Nov. 9, Goshen College's radio station, 91.1 FM The Globe (WGCS) was named "Station of the Year" by the Indiana Broadcasters Association (IBA) at the 26th Annual Spectrum Awards in Indianapolis.

As a station within the South Bend (Market Two) radio market, The Globe is judged against the work of all member stations in Market Two (Evansville, Fort Wayne, Lafayette, Muncie, South Bend and Terre Haute), regardless of size or FCC licensure. This is the first time WGCS has been named a finalist in the "Station of the Year" category. The other finalists were both commercial radio stations.

"To be awarded 'Station of the Year' by IBA is a phenomenal accomplishment," said Jason Samuel, WGCS general manager and assistant professor of communication.

Earlier this year, Goshen College was named "Radio School of the Year" by the Indiana Association of School Broadcasting, and The Globe earned the nation's top honor of "Best College Radio Station in the Nation" from the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System.

"It's like the triple crown, the trifecta." Samuel said.*—Goshen College*

## Ten Thousand Villages appoints CEO

LANCASTER, Pa.—Fair trade retailer Ten Thousand Villages has announced the appointment of Pam Raffensberger as Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Raffensberger, who most recently served as interim CEO and standing Chief Financial Officer, brings a wealth of experience in sustainable product sourcing and financial strategy, having already contributed toward the redesign and growth of the brand's online channel in addition to spearheading successful launches of two new storefront locations this year.

Raffensberger will lead Ten Thousand Villages' brick and mortar and online network of more than 80 fair trade retail stores in the United States.*—Ten Thousand Villages*

**GRACE AND TRUTH**
*A word from pastors*

# The Lord is with you

**Isaac Villegas** is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

During Christmas we remember that God has come close, as close to us as a soon-to-be born child is to her mother: God in a womb, God in our flesh.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," the angel says to Mary. "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son … the Son of God." The messenger delivers the good news: "The Lord is with you."

That's the gospel: The Lord is with you, God is with you. Everything else we say about God and ourselves and the world is commentary on this announcement: The Lord is with you—with us in joy and suffering, with us in our friendships and loneliness.

**That God is with us doesn't mean** our lives will be free from loss, from heartache. As Simeon, the man at the temple, tells Mary as she brings her newborn to be circumcised, "a sword will pierce your own soul, too." Simeon prophesies the death of her child while she holds Jesus in her arms.

> During the seasons of Advent and Christmas, we remind each other of the gospel: that God is with us, that God has chosen life with us on earth, that God will not be God without us.

The angel's peace-filled words linger with Mary while she carries the presence of God for the world, even as she ponders Simeon's ominous warning: the promise of a violent future. God will be with her, even as she will endure the torture of separation from her grown child when the sword pierces Jesus' side and pierces Mary's soul, too, as Simeon predicted.

What does it mean for God to be with Mary, and with us? It means that the story of God cannot be separated from the stories of human beings, from Mary's life and now from our lives. We name God with our lives. We describe God with our words and actions. We share God with what we do and say; because in Jesus God has become flesh; because in Mary we see God's nearness, God becoming internal to human life; because now God is still with us—incarnate, enfleshed, dwelling within us, making a home in our lives.

During the seasons of Advent and Christmas, we remind each other of the gospel: that God is with us, that God has chosen life with us on earth, that God will not be God without us. The incarnation of God in Jesus means that God cannot forsake us because God has chosen human life as God's life.

Mary's body proclaims the good news that God is not foreign to humanity but inside human life, within our lives, on our side. Her womb reveals the eternal decision of God to be for us, to join our struggle, to share in our suffering and joy, to love the world through us.

**The story of Mary and Jesus** assures us that nothing will separate us from the love of God. That's what the doctrine of the atonement is all about: the promise of our "at-one-ment" with God, the union of God and us in Jesus Christ.

"Humanity is at one with the divine in Jesus," writes theologian Kathryn Tanner in *Christ the Key.* Incarnation brings us atonement with God, our oneness in Christ through the Holy Spirit, who rests upon us now as the Spirit rested upon Mary.

Christmas invites us into a mystery: the story of God's birth as a human being, as one of us. Not the divine as separate from human. Not heaven as divorced from earth. Not God as above and us below. But God as transgressing those boundaries in order to be with us forever, an intimate presence, as close to us as flesh and blood.

"The Lord is with you."

**The angel's words to Mary** are also for us, as we share in her bewilderment at the announcement of the mystery of God in the flesh: God within her, God within us. Such news invites us to wonder at the surprising beauty of a world transfigured by God, creation as God's embrace of our lives. With God's incarnation, we now live in a world of ordinary miracles.

To believe is to let God astonish you with the Spirit's presence, to feel your way into God's mundane wonders and find yourself at the edge of words, where poetry is born, where reason tumbles into faith, where something or someone births hope within us, God's world reaching through our world, the new life of God all around us—in the eyes of a friend, the face of a stranger, the touch of a loved one, the words of a passerby.

"Christ who is all and in all," as the apostle Paul wrote. TM

# New perspectives in church history

In the summer of 2001, I. P. Asheervadam, a young historian and rising church leader in the Conference of Mennonite Brethren in India, came to Goshen (Ind.) College to do research for a history of Mennonites in the subcontinent of India. At the time, the Global Mennonite History project—now a five-volume history of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church—was still in its infancy. For Asheervadam, it was one of his first forays into the primary sources. And, initially at least, he was delighted at what he found. Here, carefully preserved in the archives of the Mennonite Church USA and the holdings of the Mennonite Historical Library were records of the early Mennonite church in India, told in reams of onionskin copies of correspondence, reports in church periodicals, and the published histories and memoirs of several generations of missionaries.

Over the next few years, however, Asheervadam's perspective began to shift. While it was wonderful to learn that sources related to the Indian Mennonite churches had been preserved, the story those records told was nearly entirely from the perspective of missionaries, administrators and sending congregations. As Asheervadam dug deeper into the project, he realized he was going to need to look at a different set of sources. Thus began his quest to gather records that would enable him to tell the story of the Mennonite churches in India from the perspective not primarily of the missionaries but of the indigenous churches, who had long since assumed control over their institutions and were now nurturing a fourth generation of Indian Mennonites in their baptism preparation classes.

**In the years since then**, Asheervadam has worked steadily to build up a collection of church-related sources in Hindi, Telugu and several other local languages. Those holdings have now found a permanent home as the Historical Library and Archives at the Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College in Shamshabad (Andhra Pradesh). Asheervadam has an expansive view of the collection. The archives not only includes materials from the Mennonite Brethren conference—by far the largest Mennonite group in India—but also records from the (Old) Mennonite Church's missions in the Dhamtari region, a few items from the General Conference churches and holdings of the Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India (MCSFI), the service organization of the Brethren in Christ and various Mennonite churches in India. Under his leadership, students at the MB Centenary Bible College have been writing histories of their local congregations; and the library features a growing shelf of master's papers written by graduates of the school on theological and historical topics.

**Soon after returning** from a visit with Asheervadam and other church leaders of the Conference of Mennonite Brethren in India, I began to digitize a collection of correspondence between J. D. Graber, longtime general secretary of the Mennonite Board of Missions, and Pyarelal Joel Malagar, the first India national ordained to the office of bishop in the Mennonite Church in India and the first director of the MCSFI. Although the material does not focus specifically on the Mennonite Brethren story, Asheervadam nonetheless expressed keen interest in these sources, and I was glad to support the growing archival collection in Shamshabad.

As I worked through that material I found myself pulled into the story of P. J. Malagar, following a journey across a full decade of his deepening friendship with Graber while also being struck by the persistent undercurrent of tension—the challenges of cross-cultural communication, the struggle to move beyond patterns of paternalism, and a deep sense that there were things happening on Malagar's side of the story that were not fully expressed in the official correspondence.

In 1981, Malagar himself wrote a small book called *The Mennonite Church in India* that included a frank appraisal of the challenges the church faced in the aftermath of the missionary era. But I sensed there are still aspects of the history that have not yet been sufficiently explored. Now, 30 years later, I. P. Asheervadam and other gifted Indian historians, are gathering the materials needed for an even fuller accounting of that story and many others.

**Writing church history** is not merely recordkeeping. Rather, the sifting, sorting and interpreting of the past—always with an eye to God's transforming presence in the lives of fallible human beings—is an act of theological interpretation that shapes ecclesial identity. As the future of the Mennonite churches in India continues to unfold, their mission and identity will be strengthened by the many stories still waiting to be written. TM

**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The sifting, sorting and interpreting of the past is an act of theological interpretation that shapes ecclesial identity.

# The church often adopts the 'binary of liberalism'

Church members often reflect the wider society in their conflicts and how they identify themselves. Joshua Brockway, a Church of the Brethren minister and a doctoral student who works on the staff of that denomination, writes about this phenomenon in his blog for Missio Alliance.

In "Scandal of the Brethren: Binary and Church," he notes how churches often divide themselves into two camps: conservative and progressive. He calls this the "binary of liberalism," which he says "has framed the way we imagine ourselves as disciples."

We in Mennonite Church USA must recognize that this isn't just true of the Church of the Brethren. It is also true of us.

Brockway writes about how this plays out: "We unintentionally (or intentionally, depending on who you talk to) label our congregations and our districts as progressive and conservative. There are even certain places that receive a wink and nod when they are mentioned because of the extent to which they reflect one or the other of the modern camps."

He goes on to get more specific about how this tends to work by looking at the question of sexuality. He notes that in 2009, Church of the Brethren leaders initiated an extended process of local study and districtwide listening sessions in response to two different responses to the question of sexuality that were presented to the church for discussion at an annual meeting. In 2011, the final report was presented to the church, and a decision was made.

"The report was a case study in the conservative-progressive divide in the church," he writes. Though not a statistical survey, the report showed that there were generally three camps that emerged from the local conversations.

First, the report said there are two camps at the far ends of the spectrum, one conservative and one progressive.

The surprise came when leaders realized that together "the two groups comprised one-third of the members of the denomination. That means that one-sixth of the denomination is decidedly progressive and another sixth is conservative."

This means that two-thirds of the denomination are somewhere in the middle of the question about sexuality. "In terms of parliamentary procedure, the deciding majority is in the middle," Brockway writes.

Further, this means that the two ends of the spectrum—the minority—are driving the conversation. Sound familiar?

This has serious consequences for the church. Brockway writes: "The ideologues on the ends—those most set in their perspective regardless of what is happening in their congregation and in their community—make no room for those in the middle to narrate their perspectives or experiences. The majority of the church is shut down by the constant debates and politics of one-third of the membership duking it out among themselves."

Brockway says that in his experience, this same breakdown is true for other issues as well: war and peace, mission and evangelism, gender and leadership. This does not mean, however, that the middle is lukewarm.

Brockway warns against adopting a model of making decisions that teaches us "there can be only two options—winner and loser, with us or against us, yes or no."

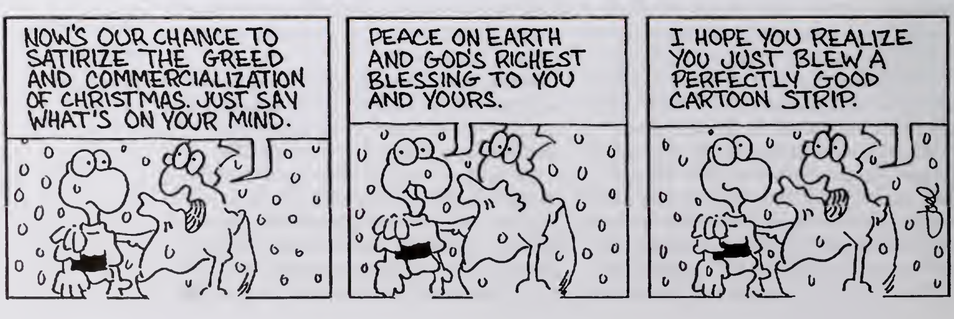
This model derives from modern liberalism, he writes, with its emphasis on efficiency and the binary of progressive and conservative, which forms us to expect only two answers.

By following this model, he concludes, "we have not only lost the memory of our past but we have lost the ability to envision the possibilities of faithfulness in our context."

Perhaps we can learn something from our sister denomination.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


NOW'S OUR CHANCE TO SATIRIZE THE GREED AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF CHRISTMAS. JUST SAY WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND.
PEACE ON EARTH AND GOD'S RICHEST BLESSING TO YOU AND YOURS.
I HOPE YOU REALIZE YOU JUST BLEW A PERFECTLY GOOD CARTOON STRIP.

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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “If it were somehow possible to deport the 11 million undocumented immigrants [now] in the United States, the result would be to deprive countless Catholic and Protestant congregations of a source of their growing spiritual vitality.”
>
> —Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

## Wasteful appraisal

According to David Posen in his book *Is Work Killing You? A Doctor's Prescription for Treating Workplace Stress*, the writing of performance appraisals and reviews is a vexing and unproductive bureaucratic practice. It's important to give feedback to employees about their work: what's working, what needs to be improved. However, the yearly or semiannual exercise of writing these reports has been shown, in some research, as not only wasteful of time but actually counterproductive in terms of the dialogue between employees and their bosses. Feedback should be timely and continuous, not infrequent, judgmental and tied to compensation, which makes it stressful instead of instructive.—*The Marketplace*

**142**

Number of people freed from death row, representing 10 percent of the number of prisoners executed since the death penalty was reinstated in the 1970s.
—*Religion News Service*

## Different pleasures, empty calories

Hedonic pleasure is gained through good food and drink, while eudaimonic pleasure is gained through serving the common good. Researchers have discovered that the two kinds of pleasure have different biological consequences. Hedonic pleasure leads to a gene expression associated with inflammation that can cause arthritis and heart disease. Eudaimonic pleasure has the opposite effect: it reduces the stress associated with inflammation. Hedonic pleasure may be the emotional equivalent of empty calories: it offers short-term pleasure with long-term ill effects.—*Christian Century*

## Drone strikes in Pakistan have killed thousands

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, based in London, has made a strenuous effort, using news sources, to count bodies after CIA drone strikes. It estimates that from 2004 through the first half of 2013, 371 drone strikes in Pakistan killed between 2,564 and 3,567 people (the range covers the minimum to the maximum credible reported deaths. Of those, between 411 and 890—12 percent to 35 percent—were civilians. Everyone agrees that the amount of collateral damage has dropped over th past two years. The BIJ estimates that civilian deaths from drone strikes in Pakistan fell to 12 percent of total deaths in 2011 and to less than 3 percent in 2012.—*The Atlantic*

## Bad news about jobs

Talk about a Catch-22, in his article “The Case of the (Still) Missing Jobs,” Timothy Noah notes that businesses are reluctant to invest their record profits in new workers because they aren't convinced people can afford to buy new goods and services. Too many of them are unemployed.
—*Pacific Standard*

## Unreasonable expectations

When Thom Rainer pastored a church in St. Petersburg, Fla., he gave his deacons a list of 20 pastoral functions. He asked each deacon to put the minimum number of hours they expected him to devote to each function. When he averaged and tallied the results, it came out to a 114-hour workweek.—*Christian Century*

## Inefficient food system

According to food activist Francs Moore Lappé, there is enough food in the world to feed everyone. “For every human being on the planet,” says Lappé, “the world produces two pounds of grain per day—roughly 3,000 calories, and that's without even counting all the beans, potatoes, nuts, fruits and vegetables we eat, too.” The problem is an inefficient food system. Nearly half the food purchased by Americans goes to waste. Meat consumption is also inefficient. “For every man, woman and child alive, 1,700 calories in grain are going to livestock, which at best can return only 400 calories to us in meat.”—*Christian Century*

**Union busting**

Percentage of working Americans who belonged to unions in 2012: **10**
In 1983: **20**
—*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

## Church news outlets struggle to keep editorial independence

The closing of several Protestant denominational newspapers, magazines and other news services has played a part in eroding the standards of professional religious journalism, according to members of the Associated Church Press. As denominational news services contend with fiscal challenges that have beset secular media as well, church press officials worry these outlets have lost their editorial independence and are increasingly performing public relations roles for their denominations.—*Religion News Service*

A meditation on the implications of incarnation

# When God became a baby

by Gordon Houser

www.sxc.hu

Our small congregation celebrated the births of two babies this past summer. On a Sunday morning and at other gatherings, you'll see people taking turns holding these infants, giving the parents a break and themselves the pleasure of holding a baby. But after a while, the baby gets fussy, then cries, perhaps needing to be fed, and back he or she goes to the mother.

Babies are wonderful, innocent, cuddly, so cute. But they also cry and poop and need attention, sometimes in the middle of the night, when parents are trying to get some needed sleep.

Which brings us to Christmas.

When you dig through the consumerist clutter that Christmas has become, you get to a startling belief: at a point in real history, God became a baby.

**The Almighty Creator took shape** as a mewling, hungry baby born to a Jewish girl in an animal trough in an obscure backwater village in the outskirts of the Roman Empire millennia ago.

We tend to mouth this belief—or merely think about it briefly once a year—without considering quite how outlandish, how radical such a belief is. Or what implications it may have for our own lives.

It's so radical, in fact, that we tend not to believe it—not in our bones (pun intended).

The belief I'm talking about has a theological name: "incarnation," which means "in the flesh." It is one of the central doctrines of Christianity—and one that distinguishes it from other religions.

In the first several centuries of the Christian era, the church was sorting out the implications of

Photos from www.sxc.hu

their experience of Jesus having been born, having walked among witnesses, died, then been raised from the dead. In several councils—gatherings of leaders from across the church—participants decided on language that carefully named Jesus as human and divine. The Nicene Creed, for example, says that Jesus is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made" and later adds that he "was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary."

In our spirituality we are to follow the Spirit's leading and manifest the divine life in the arena of worldly existence.

Although we may not often use such language, we tend to take this belief for granted and wonder why those Christians back then fought over the wording. The reason, in a very small nutshell, is that many followers of Jesus either denied Jesus' divinity (Arians) or his humanity (Gnostics).

Arianism taught that Jesus was made by God the Father and is not "of one substance with the Father," as the Nicene Creed states.

Gnosticism, meanwhile, taught that the material world should be shunned and the spiritual world embraced. "Spiritual" here means nonmaterial.

Many followers of Jesus held to one of these beliefs, and that was a problem. But that was then, you say.

Today, however, these same beliefs exist and are temptations for all of us.

Are some of us not inclined at times to see Jesus as a great teacher and prophet, one who showed compassion to the marginalized, yet not as divine? That's just going too far.

Are others of us not inclined to question the importance of the things of this world and focus solely on going to heaven when we die? Do not some of us downplay what we may call "social issues" and want to focus on spiritual realities and preaching the Word?

In my book *Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality* (Cascadia, 2011), I write that " 'spiritual' does not mean noncorporeal or disembodied. In our spirituality we are to follow the Spirit's leading and manifest the divine life in the arena of worldly existence."

**God is present in our world.** As Richard Valantasis in his book *Centuries of Holiness: Ancient Spirituality Refracted for a Postmodern Age* (Continuum, 2005) has written: "everything in the world—every religious tradition, every scientific exploration, every medical breakthrough, every political situation, the environment, outer space—everything in the world has been altered by the presence of God in the physical universe."

Furthermore, every part of our life—how we eat, bathe, work, play, celebrate or worship—is to be spiritual activity, following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Stephanie Paulsell in her excellent book *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* (Jossey-Bass, 2002) calls us to "honor our bodies and the bodies of others in the midst of everyday life" and to attend to "the sacredness of the body when we bathe and dress, eat and drink, run and rest and love."

Some of the implications of Christmas, of this belief in God becoming flesh, are not very comfortable. Just as those cuddly babies soon need feeding or having their diapers changed—and often in the middle of the night—so we are bodies that often break down, that experience hunger or thirst, illness, the hundred little things that bug us.

Just as we tend to romanticize Christmas—the

tinsel, the gifts, the family together, the old movies on TV—we tend to romanticize our spiritual lives. Following Jesus is more about serving others, sharing the gospel or going to church than about our everyday activities around bathing, dressing, eating, resting or loving. We'd rather not talk about how we spend our money, our sexuality or dying. Such things are private and hidden away. Money, sex and death are taboo subjects.

In this way we tend to follow the ways of our society. Esteemed critic Harold Bloom has called Gnosticism the American religion. More and more of our existence is disembodied. Increasingly we relate to each other via the Internet, where the flesh does not exist. Fewer of us gather together. Instead we stay in our offices or our living rooms.

**Mennonites lift up community** as a central concern, yet we often fail to practice it. It's difficult to maintain such a practice in a society where the individual is preeminent.

Paulsell writes that "the integrity of our bodies is a gift from God, but the meaning of our bodies does not stop at the boundaries of our skin. For we belong to one another, and so we are called to attend to the effects of our choices."

This need for relating is a part of how we are made and even goes to our genes. In his article "The Social Life of Genes" in *Pacific Standard* (September/October), David Dobbs reports on research showing how our experience affects us even on a cellular level. He interviews a scientist named Steve Cole, who studies social psychology and the genetics of immunology.

Cole discusses stress and notes that "social isolation is the best-established, most robust social or psychological risk factor for disease out there." He adds, "Nothing can compete."

Cole also makes a distinction between our environment and our experience. "Your subjective experience carries more power than your objective situation," he says. Two of us may share the same environment but experience it differently. "You can shape both your environment and yourself by how you act," he says.

We live in the flesh. In Jesus, God became flesh and "lived among us" (John 1:14). In that environment we experience all kinds of limitations—hunger, thirst, sickness, suffering, death—as well as joys beyond our hopes—a sumptuous feast, good company, loving friends.

We'd rather not talk about how we spend our money, our sexuality or dying. Such things are private and hidden away.

That environment is where and how we live our spiritual lives, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

According to Cole, "your experiences today will influence the molecular composition of your body for the next two to three months, or, perhaps, for the rest of your life." He adds, "Plan your day accordingly."

As we celebrate Christmas, God becoming flesh in a vulnerable baby in that faraway time and town, let us live in the flesh in ways that build communities of grace, joy and peace.

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite *and a member of New Creation Fellowship Church in Newton, Kan.*

# True

Our worship should be reflected in our everyday lives.

Apparently we in the United States are losing religion. Pundits report on the growth of the "nones," the folks who say, when asked, that they have no religious affiliation. This does not necessarily mean they don't believe in God or some higher deity; in fact, most of them do. They just don't want to be identified with any particular religion.

by Betsy Headrick McCrae

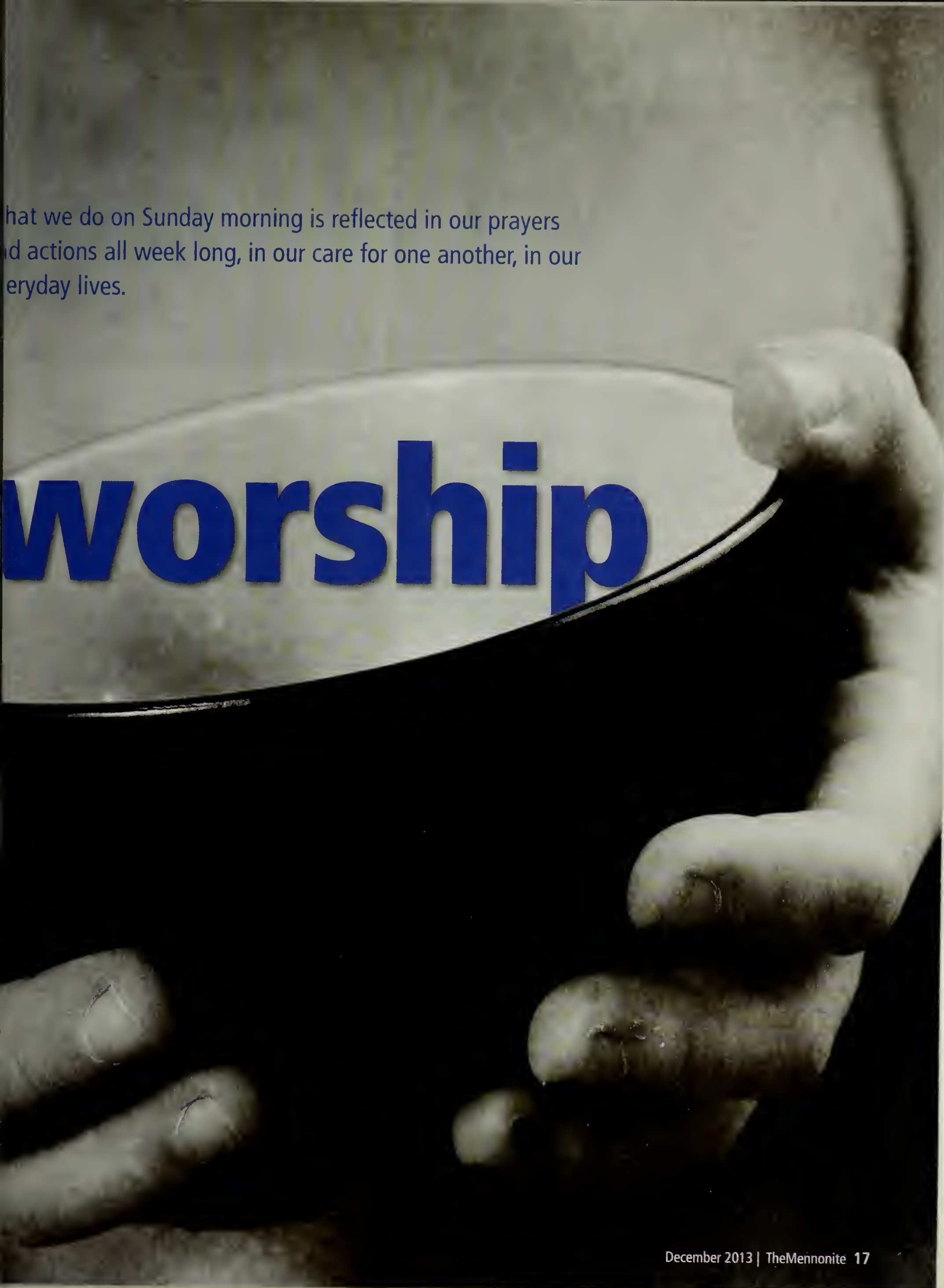
bigstockphoto.com

One of the reasons for this, especially among people under 30, is the feeling that organized religion equals hypocrisy, that what religious people say is not reflected in what they do. In reality, they feel, religious people are exclusive, not inclusive. They are selfish, not generous. They care about themselves, not others. This is a real problem, though it is not a new problem. It is something people who have faith have struggled with since the beginning.

In our Mennonite women meetings we are studying of the book of Amos. At one meeting the topic was true worship. We looked at an uncomfortable passage. Amos, speaking on behalf of God, says: "I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps" (Amos 5:21-23).

**This is God's opinion of religious hypocrisy.** It is God's reaction to folks doing what they think God wants in terms of worship, then going out into the world to live lives that are greedy and selfish, judgmental and hurtful to others and themselves. This was happening in Amos' day, and it happens in our day as well. This is the hypocrisy some folks in our own culture have experienced. They hear empty words and false promises. So they throw in the towel and become a "none." Can you blame them?

At our Mennonite Women meeting we considered this passage from Amos and talked about worship. For most of us, worship on a Sunday morning is a meaningful part of our lives. That feels good. But then our leader, Jeni, asked us, "Do you think God is pleased with our worship? Do you think there's any need for a



hat we do on Sunday morning is reflected in our prayers
d actions all week long, in our care for one another, in our
eryday lives.

# worship

Photos by James R. Krabill

prophet like Amos to challenge us, to say to us, You're being hypocritical, you're just going through the motions, your worship is all noise to God?" That question startled and disturbed us. We didn't know what to say.

In his booklet "What Is an Anabaptist Christian?" (*Missio Dei*, Number 18, Mennonite Mission Network, 2008), Palmer Becker writes that as Anabaptist Christians we have three core values:

1. Jesus is the center of our faith.
2. Community is the center of our lives.
3. Reconciliation is the center of our work.

Our worship includes thanking God for and living into the salvation we've received through Jesus Christ.

How do these core values shape our worship?

Let's start with the first core value: Jesus is the center of our faith. We follow Jesus. He is our Savior. According to Becker, "In the Anabaptist tradition, salvation means being transformed from an old way of life to a life that exemplifies the spirit and actions of Jesus. Salvation … is made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who empowers disciples to follow Jesus in daily life."

Our worship includes thanking God for and living into the salvation we've received through Jesus Christ. We do this by learning about Jesus, by knowing who Jesus is and by following Jesus in our daily lives. What does that entail?

"When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing' " (Luke 4:16-21).

**Jesus claimed these words from Isaiah 61 as his mission.** If we truly are followers of Jesus, this is our mission as well. It seems that keeping Jesus at the center of our faith leads us directly to the third Anabaptist core value: Reconciliation is the center of our work. The rituals of Sunday morning worship—singing, praying, proclaiming, hearing—are important because they keep our focus on Jesus and teach us about him, but they are worth nothing if this focus is not carried further, if the work of reconciliation—Jesus' work—does not become the focus of what we do in our daily lives. If we, as followers of Jesus, honor God and do the work of reconciliation, we will stand strong and bring glory to God. "They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory." (Isaiah 61:3b) This is part of true worship.

However, from an Anabaptist perspective, worship is not an individual act. It is something that happens best in community. Yes, we each need to spend time with God on our own. But this is not enough because the very act of coming together is also a means of worship, a way of honoring God. Coming together and becoming a community is what God desires for us and for the world. The

author of Ephesians expresses this well:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ... So you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:13, 19-20).

**God works to reconcile those who would be enemies or strangers and bring them into one community.** Through Jesus, God does this. God reconciles Jews and Gentiles, outsiders and insiders. We honor God by taking this seriously and by coming together as a community, core value #2. There we practice living faithfully and peaceably together, inspired by the teachings of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, fueled by prayer and praise. Then we take our faith out into the world to work at reconciliation, to build community there as well. All these things go together. We cannot take them apart and still be in God's favor.

When we pledge our allegiance to God, it is not something to take lightly. If we enter into this relationship and then turn our backs on parts of it, we are in for trouble. If we focus only on "me and Jesus" and decline to be part of the work of building a community, or if we dedicate our lives to working for reconciliation but do not look to God for guidance and strength, or if we allow the worshiping community of which we are a part to become riddled with hostility, then we can justifiably be called hypocrites. Our worship is no longer sincere. It is not true. And it is worse than that: It is damaging to us and to the world around us, a world that desperately needs to see something authentic and be invited into the life-giving light of God.

**Our worship, if it is true, has an effect on the world.** What we do on Sunday morning is reflected in our prayers and actions all week long. It is reflected in our care for one another. It is reflected in our everyday lives. We gather to worship so that we can be scattered to serve. It is all these things together that make us a true and convincing witness to the love of God and to the life we have received in Jesus Christ.

True worship includes but is not limited to the rituals of our Sunday mornings. It includes but is not limited to the caring and sharing that happens in our communities. It includes but is not limited to the ongoing work of reconciliation in our daily lives. True worship is all these things and more, for it expresses our longing and desire to be like Jesus and to honor God with our whole being. This is something the world will see and will know is real.

*Betsy Headrick McCrae is pastor of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakewood, Colo.*

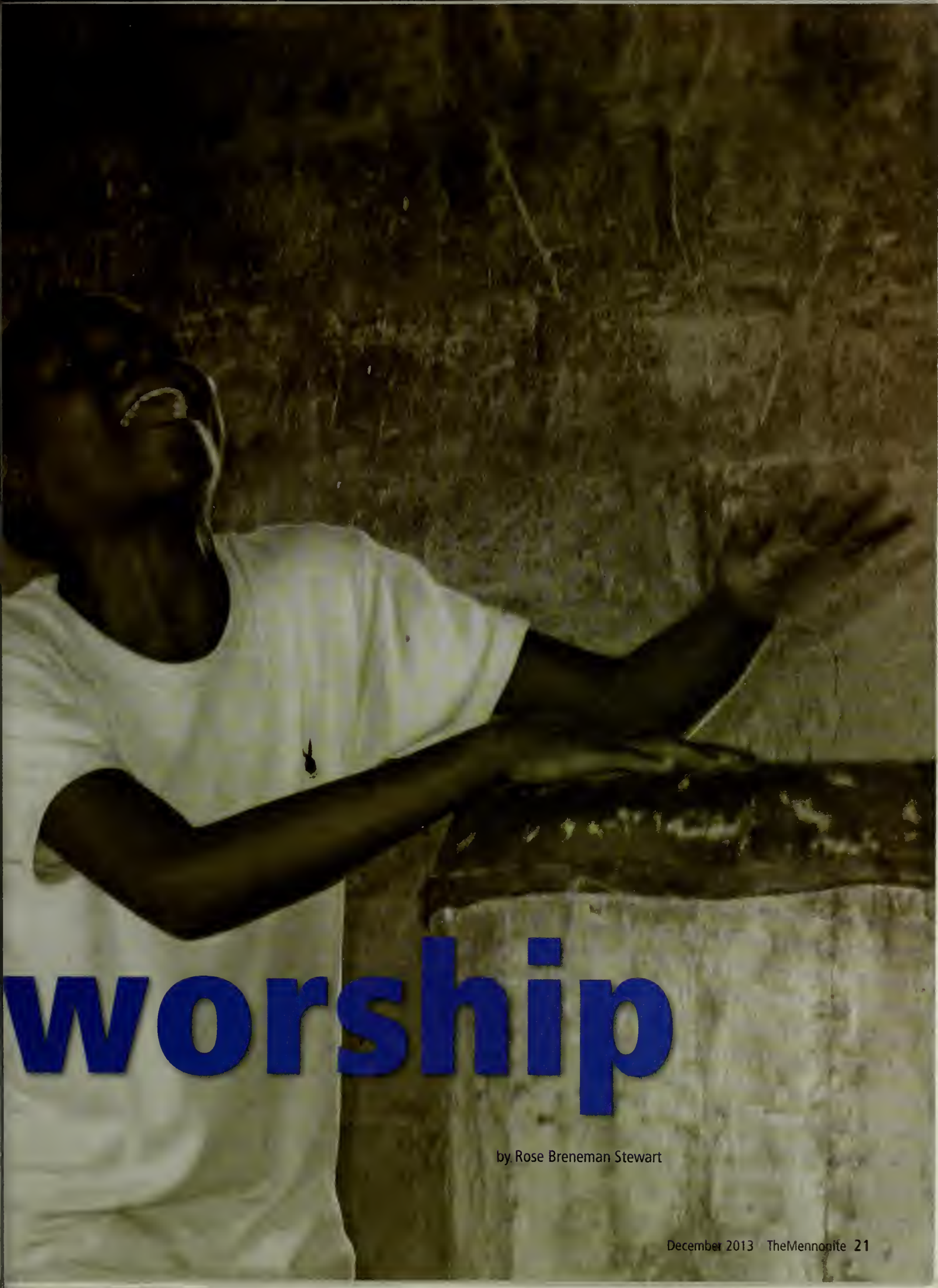
1968
1969
1973
1982
1986
1994
2005
2008
BLEED BLUE!
20
30
40
50
40
17

Photo provided

Could we learn something about Christian worship from spectator sports?

# Public

Shortly after dawn one day, my husband and a friend headed out to a football game. Their anticipation had begun as soon as they had tickets. They packed food and gear and confirmed directions. They drove through towns, over mountains and into the fan-filled parking lot. Finally, the pair inched into the stadium, joining the crowd arrayed in blue and white. Spectators shouted, pumped their fists, leapt to their feet, clapped wildly and occasionally writhed in distress. Collective groans and cheers rang out. This football game was truly a total body experience.



# worship

by Rose Breneman Stewart

Photos by James R. Krabill

**Much current western worship** requires little preparation and calls for little movement. We rouse from sleep, gobble some food, drive to church and slip into a pew. Distracted by myriad concerns from the week, we try to quiet ourselves. What follows is often a sedentary and somewhat solitary service. We sit and listen to prayers, sermons and testimonies.

Could we learn something about Christian worship from spectator sports? What would it mean if believers brought the same level of anticipation, spirit, purpose and fervor into corporate worship? Just like the pair who prepared for the game, we should be expectant in mind and body as we look ahead to worship. As the spectators felt a common purpose in supporting their team, we should unite in worshiping one God and feel spirited and fervent in doing so. Using our bodies and our voices more might help us experience more joy, spirit and unity in our worship.

Using our bodies and our voices more might help us experience more joy, spirit and unity in our worship.

Indeed, modern believers can draw lessons from ancient Israel's three major pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkoth. All involve preparing food, reciting Scripture and traveling. The ancient Hebrews marched up to Jerusalem singing and praying. We have a record of these prayers of ascent in Psalms 120-134.

Contemporary culture suggests that posture and movement are important for communication. We ask students to sit up, we expect prospective employees to give a firm handshake, we smile when we greet friends and we stand when a dignitary enters the room. In all these, our body not only communicates but also informs our disposition.

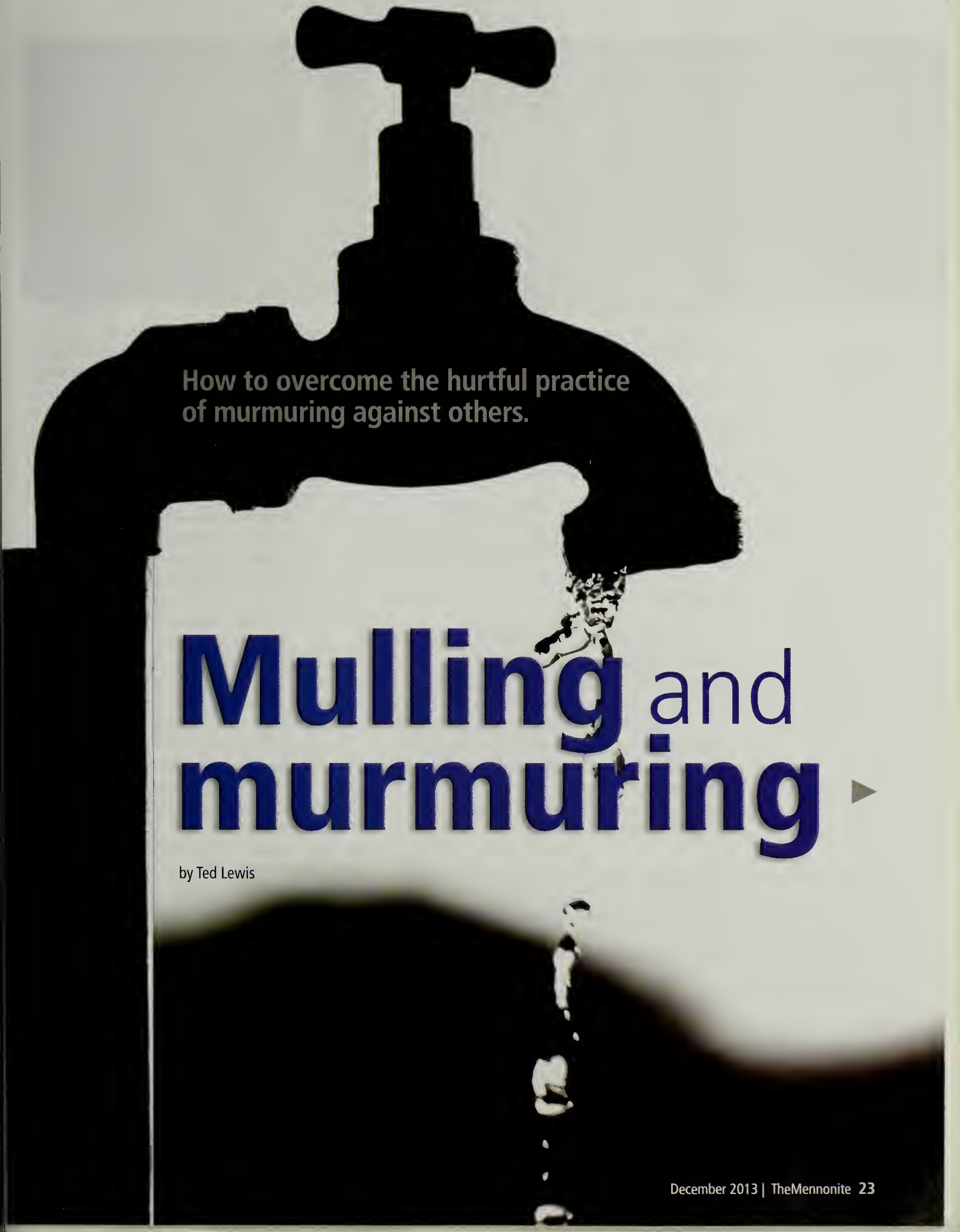
Jesus seemed to have underscored the importance of the body when he instituted Communion. Often we stand and process forward toward a common table in quiet meditation. Some of us fold our hands, and others may join in reverent, meditative hymns. In taking the bread and the cup, we reaffirm that we are body, we sustain the body and we nourish our souls by this simple yet profound act.

**Movement and vocalization** make prayer more meaningful. As a child, I knelt for prayers and felt reverence. We stood to say the Lord's Prayer aloud every Sunday, and I marveled at the sound. More recently I have been moved by the full-throated unison singing of the Lord's Prayer as we stand and clasp hands. When we stand, we are ready to receive. When we kneel, we are reminded of our humanity and God's sovereignty. Once in a Good Friday service, my congregation knelt 12 times at regular intervals during a solemn liturgy, an act that transformed Good Friday for me.

We already use our bodies and voices in worship: call-and-response readings, reciting Psalms or prayers together, standing for singing or for the Gospel reading, giving offerings by walking or dancing to the front, passing the peace or kneeling in prayer. These moving and powerful ways of engaging our whole beings in worship are too infrequent and unimaginative.

Corporate worship is an opportunity to engage together in praise and prayer. It is our chance to affirm our belonging to the new creation, and it is our chance to strengthen ties with the universal assembly of believers. If we approached worship more like a football game, we would enrich those corporate bonds, connect to Christians worldwide and stand on ancient Hebrew ritual. Even the most sedate among us can feel a leap of joy in clapping or shouting an amen.

*Rose Breneman Stewart is a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.*



How to overcome the hurtful practice of murmuring against others.

# Mulling and murmuring

by Ted Lewis

Like a leaky faucet, negative thinking and speaking patterns can also persist over time, distracting us with their constant dripping. This can happen between two people who complain about a third person, but it can also happen inside our own minds, where we may carry on a conversation between our inner selves. I call these two examples murmuring and mulling.

All images from sxc.hu

Mulling for me is most obvious when I lie awake in bed, unable to sleep well, reviewing over and over an unresolved situation with another person. The sure sign of this is that I can't turn off my thinking, no less than I can turn off a dripping faucet. "It's unfair what he did to me, so how can he think he's in the right? Yet why did I react that way to him? I wish I would have just walked away. The next time we meet, here's what I'd like to say."

Murmuring is a sign of a group's failure to take responsibility for getting into a tough situation plus failure to take positive responsibility for getting out of it.

There's nothing wrong with any of these ruminations. Everyone experiences them. But the issue is that an emotional pressure source keeps them going like a broken record. This is different than mulling over a one-time decision: "Hmm. Should I go to that meeting this evening?" That's not the sort of thing that keeps me up at night. What I'm writing about are thoughts that keep cycling through our heads with no positive outcome.

**Murmuring can simply be seen** as the social equivalent of mulling. It involves a verbal exchange between people who sustain a chronic drip, drip of negative commentary. Even the etymology (mur-mur) suggests repetition. Sometimes within a church community, certain people will gravitate toward each other because they share an acceptance of airing critical opinions about others without taking positive action.

Both mulling and murmuring, then, have a chronic dimension, a negative-focus dimension and, third, a dimension that blocks constructive resolution. They seem to have a self-perpetuating element that resists closure. This keeps people stuck in the past, unable to move on in life. But thankfully, in light of biblical wisdom and God's grace, there is a remedy to end the dripping.

The classic biblical example of murmuring is when the Israelites grumbled about their lack of food or water in the wilderness (Numbers 11 to 16). "Did you bring us here to die? We want to go back to Egypt." Imagine how Moses felt, being the target of discontent. Several complaint stories have these common features: The murmuring crowd dwells on their lack, dwells on the past and dwells on their mistrust of leaders.

At root, murmuring is the logical outcome for people who have little to no trust. This is usually why their diagnosis of a given situation is exaggerated and anxiety-ridden. "We're going to die," they cry out. In the narratives, God actually gets perturbed, ready to wipe them out, while Moses plays the cool-headed mediator to avert all-out catastrophe.

Numbers 13 is worth noting for the way one subgroup had "spread discouraging reports" to the larger group. Israelite spies had scoped out

the Promised Land, returning with good news and bad news: "The food is large, but so are the warriors." Fear, then, contagiously infected the community. "Now we will die in battle." This sort of socially sanctioned fear is hard to reverse.

**The worst part of murmuring** is when people start blaming others, and that's what folks did to Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb. They projected their own inner negativity onto their leaders and "talked about stoning" them. One conclusion is that murmuring is a sign of a group's failure to take responsibility for getting into a tough situation plus failure to take positive responsibility for getting out of it.

Let's return now to mulling. Like the characters in a murmuring narrative, mulling can involve an individual's pattern of blaming and not taking responsibility. But there is an interesting twist with chronic mulling. Mulling is often marked by an ambiguous mixture of blaming others and blaming oneself. We may find ourselves conflicted within as to how we interpret a complex entanglement with another person.

A classic biblical case study for mulling is Saul, Israel's first king. Saul is portrayed as a conflicted soul, torn by inner fears and jealousies. Within Saul is an inner victim that is never fully healed and an inner offender that never fully accepts personal responsibility. And thus Saul mulls to his own detriment. How ironic that David, a musician-comforter for Saul in his tormented moods, later becomes Saul's very nemesis. Saul's obsession to kill David is really about his own conflict with his darker self.

As a mediator of people in dispute, I have worked with clients who say how they lost good sleep for many years due to emotional stress. I, too, have had poor sleep at times. One time I struggled for several months over a situation with another person that set me into a downward spiral of mulling. It involved a mix of self-blaming and blaming the other, yet the line between them was always blurry.

What helped me to rise out of the mire of mulling were three strands that wove together:

- compassion
- vulnerability
- responsibility

Praying became a way for me to halt the dripping thoughts of mulling; through partnership with God, my weakness became an area where I felt new strength.

**Having compassion for the other person's** history was a significant starting point for me to break through the broken-record messages in my head. Without tuning into the longer history of his woundedness, my thoughts would dwell on my own short-term woundedness. But by a conscious effort to dwell on his possible past pain, I became more compassionate, and this provided a bridge where there was once a wall.

Second, I began to accept my own vulnerability and powerlessness. "God, I just can't fix this situation." Through prayer I was able to release the weight of things. And the more I went into prayer mode, the more I could accept my own vulnerability on two levels: my offending role and my victimized role. Praying became a way for me to halt the dripping thoughts of mulling; through partnership with God, my weakness became an area where I felt new strength.

Finally, I was able to shift from the past to the future, and this allowed me to take personal responsibility. Rather than feeling sorry for myself or projecting my darker issues onto the other person, I was in a better place to choose positive thoughts toward him and work on personal areas of growth. This is where transformation begins. As in the verse, "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good," change starts in the mind and moves into action.

This trio of compassion, vulnerability and responsibility can also reverse the social dynamics of murmuring. It only takes one or two courageous people in a church subgroup to break through the chronic dripping of negative complaints or rumors. It begins with the open acknowledgement that "we are all in this together." Everyone contributed to the anxiety and can now contribute to positive change.

Without this foundation of forgiveness, it is hard for us to make progress in our intertwined journeys of healing and formation.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul showed this church how to ward off mulling and murmuring. He first narrated his own story, where he could have easily blamed himself or his enemies for landing him in a Roman prison. Instead, he narrated his joy and acceptance and how God's purposes can be advanced in his suffering state. His story, of course, was patterned after the "mindset of Christ" that sets the bar for all Christians.

Meanwhile, two church women of Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, are divided from each other. Perhaps one or both are locked into habits of mulling and murmuring. Paul pleads for them to be reconciled, then weaves together several themes that can offset the power of negative thinking and communication: joy, forbearance (or gentleness) and prayer, all of which lead to a transcendent peace. These are the positive antidotes that complement Paul's admonition in chapter 2: "Do all things without murmuring and arguing."

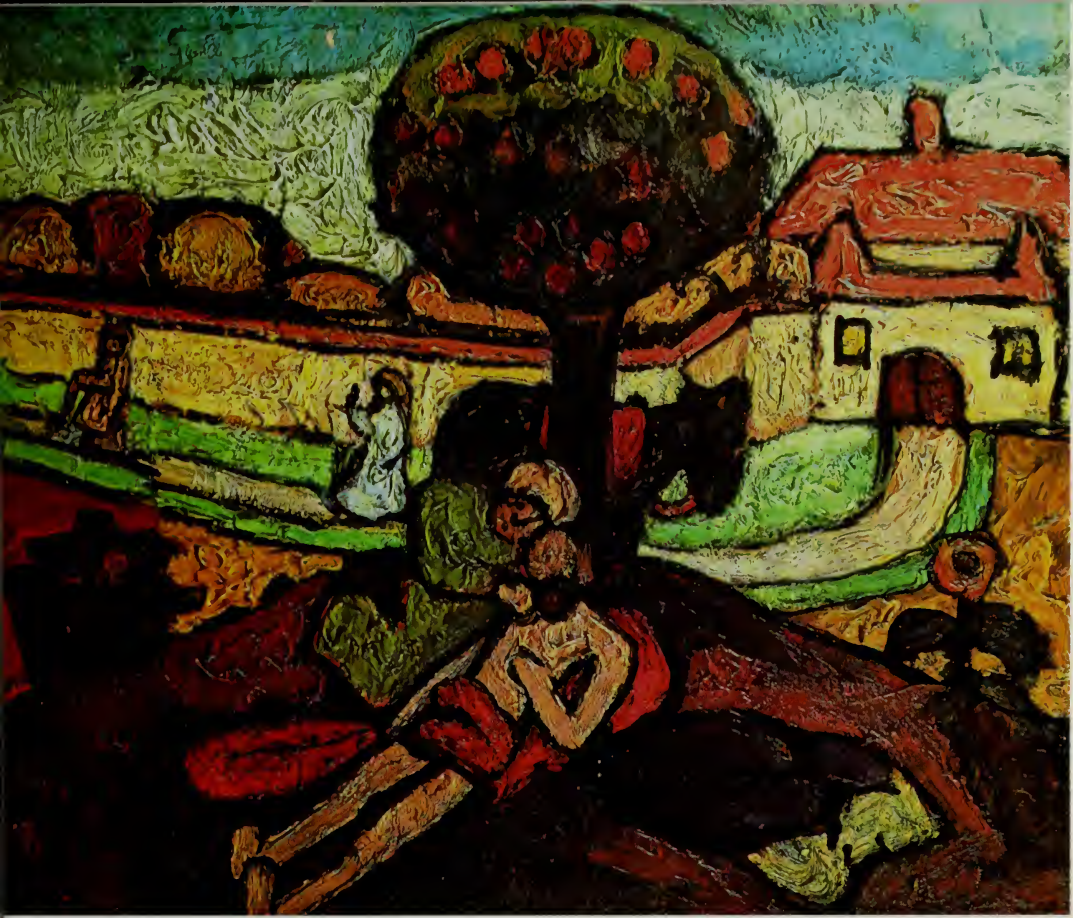
**But what if we personally feel wounded** by another person, or what if we are dealing with another person who has a past history of deep woundedness? How do we cope when the default reflexes of protectiveness or guardedness go into high gear? It helps to know that we are not alone in our efforts to practice compassion, vulnerability and responsibility. God, through Jesus, has already mastered these practices, and the result is unconditional forgiveness for all humanity.

Without this foundation of forgiveness, it is hard for us to make progress in our intertwined journeys of healing and formation. But as God gives us both the gift and the guide for moving forward, we can begin to live as if that forgiveness has already released us and others from the complexities of woundedness and woundingness. Jesus bore it all. By inviting the disciples to touch his own post-resurrection wounds, now healed, he is effectively saying, "Your own wounds need not remain touchy or oversensitive."

With such forgiveness and freedom, we can then be extenders of forgiveness (John 20:21f). We experience our solidarity with others, being the same complex human beings to hurt and to be hurt, but also being Christ-led human beings to practice compassion, vulnerability and responsibility. With Spirit-empowerment we wish blessings upon those who have troubled our minds and open ourselves to be part of that blessing.

Ultimately, reversing the negative drip-drip-drip of mulling or murmuring lets us enter a zone that is freer and lighter and opens the door for newness and transformation in our relationships with others. By arresting the negative momentum, we move forward in our healing and formation journeys, and if that leads to better sleep at night, all the better.

*Ted Lewis lives in Duluth, Minn., and works as a restorative justice trainer, mediator and consultant for conflict resolution programs and church communities.*



### 4 lessons from the Good Samaritan

# The neighbors

by David A. Stevens

Many Mennonite Church USA congregations are engaging the Scriptures with renewed intentionality. These initiatives are taking a number of forms, including congregation-wide Year of the Bible programs. This energy fits well with our denominational priority of spiritual formation. ▶

Jesus' story encourages me to examine my own prejudices, where I may have labeled individuals or groups as bad and been blind to their goodness.

The stories of the Bible have the capacity not only to make a one-time impact on our lives but to continue shaping us over a lifetime.

Perhaps you've had the experience of reading a passage in the Bible that speaks to you at a certain time in a certain way and then you read it again at another time and it has something fresh to say to you. This is a common experience. The Holy Spirit is at work in us, connecting us to the biblical story just when we need it, in just the way that we need it.

I've had that experience a lot with the Good Samaritan. As time goes on, Jesus' story has continued to reverberate with new meanings and new shapings for me. Below I share four lessons the Good Samaritan passage has taught me over the years. These may be like or different from your own learning. They attest the ongoing formation that the living word is accomplishing in the lives of Jesus' followers.

When have I experienced difficult decisions between two good things, even two good things for God?

**Lesson one**

In my younger years, the Good Samaritan spoke to me as a story about good people and bad people. The priest and the Levite were bad people because they didn't help someone in need. The Samaritan was a good person because he did help someone in need. And through his story, Jesus is encouraging me to be a good person like the Samaritan—one who helps others; one who helps others even when it is inconvenient. That's a good lesson and a good encouragement.

**Lesson two**

During my seminary years I had the privilege of learning a lot about the Jewish people in Jesus' day. I learned that the Jews and the Samaritans were neighbors and did not get along. In this context of hostility between Jews and Samaritans, Jesus comes along and tells a story to Jewish people that holds up a Samaritan as a role model. We can imagine his listeners being disconcerted, perhaps offended, and certainly challenged. For Jesus' first listeners, he told about a bad person who turned out to be a good person, and that's not the way the world is supposed to work. Jesus intentionally chose the most unacceptable hero for maximum shock value. And he did this to register a sharp social challenge.

That was a new lesson for me. The Samaritan was not just neighborly; he crossed a wide social divide in order to be neighborly. The Good Samaritan is about good people and bad people but also about prejudice, prejudice about how we determine who is good and who is bad.

Jesus' story encourages me to examine my own prejudices, where I may have labeled individuals or groups as bad and been blind to their goodness. Jesus' story asks me, "Where are the social divisions in my community, school, church, civic organization, business, retirement community? What can I do to help dismantle those divides? Jesus' story shows that difficult circumstances can bring out the best in people and lift up the common good that binds us together. How can I work for the common good? That's a good lesson and a good encouragement.

**Lesson three**

Jesus' story is about good people and bad people. It's about prejudices and overcoming social divides. The Good Samaritan is also a story about the hard choices we sometimes make in order to serve others, that life is often about difficult decisions between two good options.

This new lesson came to me when I realized I've been hard on the priest and the Levite over the years. Rather than being hopelessly bad people, they were faced with a difficult choice about which way to serve God and others. Their choice wasn't between good and bad options but between two good options. Let me explain.

When Christians read the New Testament, we are set up to think the worst about Jewish leaders and not without reason. Some of them were enemies of Jesus. So we're disposed to regard the priest and Levite as selfish and heartless for not stopping to help the injured man.

Yet most people in Jesus' day respected priests and Levites. The priests led worship at the Temple, and the Levites assisted them. To exercise

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# AMBS window

## IMPROVISING LEADERSHIP

**David Miller, Associate Professor of Missional Leadership Development**

When I began serving as a pastor in the early 1980s, a wide array of seminars and workshops focused on strategic planning for congregations and pastors. All that was needed, these resources told us, were a clear mission statement and defined, measurable goals for the church. Pastors were to function as CEOs to chart the way toward a successful future.

However, these corporate planning models, geared around notions of success, growth and dominance, have largely come up short in the face of changing communities, declining attendance, diminished social power and prestige of Christian congregations, and greater skepticism about the trustworthiness of Christian proclamation.

Over time, I discovered I was drawing increasingly on lessons from my earlier education as an actor and experience in improvisation. As actors, we were schooled in the canons of theater—plot, character development, stagecraft. These traditions were then released in the unanticipated challenges of improvisational situations. Tradition became living and dynamic—not mere repetition, but new embodiment. Actors who scarcely knew each other could create together in the face of new twists, conflicts, possibilities and limitations.

As the church finds itself in an increasingly changed and challenged social location, leadership requires the skills and soul of a jazz musician or improvisational actor. Well grounded in the canons of scripture and tradition, leaders seek to shape and release congregational imagination toward new improvisations of the tradition.

The past is not the object of defense and preservation, but the foundation of creative and creating hope that seeks to embody the 'what if' of God's vision. What if Isaiah was right that the Word of God is accomplishing God's purpose in the world (Isaiah 55:10-11)? What if Christ's Spirit is continuing to yearn that the world may know "the things that make for peace"? What if our congregations seek not to have all the answers, but instead—as communities of memory, anticipation and improvisation—live into experiments in God's reconciliation and peace?

In such a move we are more recipients and learners than managers of God's gracious work. We learn anew that truth that transforms is found more in participation than in rational defense.

In these pages, you will read of leaders and congregations engaging in improvisational ventures resulting in racial reconciliation, justice for immigrants, compassion and care for children and youth, healing and welcome for a former convict—the ancient vision of God's shalom embodied anew on contemporary stages. ●

**Photo:** The Nueva Vida Norristown New Life congregation celebrated its 23rd anniversary in July when this photo was taken. See more on page 2. Photo by Peder Wiegner.

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# BRIDGING CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

TIME IS NOW
P FAMILIES
WE

During September, Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship of Boise, Idaho, took part in eleven days of prayer and fasting for immigration reform—eleven days to symbolize the estimated eleven million undocumented people currently living in our country.

After the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix with its emphasis on immigration, our congregation had a worship series on immigration and the Bible, which led to a letter-writing campaign, which eventually led us into joining with some other Idaho congregations in this fasting and prayer effort (including two other Mennonite congregations).

As a congregation we are seeking to be a prophetic voice in our community. We know this means speaking from who we are as a peculiar people of faith—a people who seek to point to the God that created all people in God's very own image with limitless potential. We also know this means we must pay attention for where God is already at work within our community. Participating in this time of prayer and fasting was, for us, a clear place of intersection of those two elements: who we are as a community of faith, and where God was already at work in our community.

*Marc Schlegel is pastor of Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship. He completed an AMBS Master of Divinity degree in 2012.*

Photo: Marc Schlegel speaks at an immigration reform rally on the steps of the Idaho state capitol to kick off "11 days of prayer and fasting for immigration reform." Behind him are photos of "Aspiring Americans" who are the face of this movement.

Nueva Vida Norristown New Life (NVNNL) launched an extensive mission, Enlarging Our Place in God's World, in 2008. The vision is built on the intercultural congregation's call from God to share the reconciling and transforming love of Jesus with the people of Norristown and beyond.

The mission includes sharing space with a childcare ministry for low income families, bridging the digital divide at the New Life Internet café, photo ID clinics, youth outreach, prayer walks, street evangelism, a discipleship housing ministry for single women, outdoor worship services, preparation of social safety net applications, translation services, and backyard peace camps for community children. Some members also minister at a thrift store, soup kitchen and homeless shelter.

The long-range plan is to form ACTS 2 Ministries as a community development corporation. Anticipated ministries include counseling services, restorative justice peace circles and restarting a microenterprise training program for the city and county.

The congregation represents 17 cultures/ethnicities. Everyone, even children and youth, can find ways to participate in God's vision for the congregation. The mission grows through much prayer, discernment, sacrificial giving and support from Franconia Conference and other partners.

*Sharon Gehman Williams (Master of Divinity 1986) serves as minister of worship at NVNNL.*

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## ALUMNI NEWS

Several graduates have accepted positions at Oaklawn, a Mennonite psychiatric hospital and mental health center:

- **Andrea Opel (Master of Divinity 2012)**, social worker with Elkhart County Child and Adolescent Clinical Services.
- **Rolando Sosa Granados (Master of Divinity 2010)**, social worker with child and adolescent clinical services.
- **Joseph Vallejos (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2010)**, social worker with addictions services.

**Jake Hess (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2013)** is serving as co-coordinator and caseworker in the Community Service Restitution Program with the Center for Community Justice in Elkhart.

**Sandy Miller (Master of Divinity 2012)** was ordained Aug. 18 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, for her ministry as director for church relations at Mennonite Mission Network.

**Sherri Martin-Carman (Master of Divinity 1998)** was ordained Oct. 27 at the Floradale Mennonite Church in Ontario for her ministry as a retirement home chaplain. ●

In January, I felt the Spirit nudging me to pursue a pastoral internship at St. James AME (African Methodist Episcopal) as I listened to Rev. Jennifer Tinsley preach at a Dr. King Day service. Rev. Tinsley raised a prophetic cry against the structures of death, such as mass incarceration and gun violence, which are devastating the black community in Elkhart.

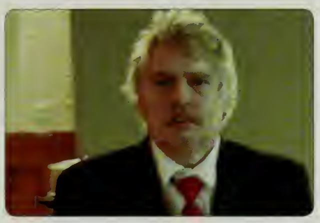
Several weeks into my internship, the powers of death struck the black community in Elkhart when a 16-year-old was killed in a drive-by shooting. The acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin stirred up more "groans too deep for words."

My summer internship allowed me to enter spaces where I was graciously invited to listen to the Spirit groaning through the urgent prayers voiced by members of Christ's body who are awaiting liberation from racial oppression. As a result, my own longing for a racially just world deepened, and I was compelled to attend to the ways my privilege and collusion with oppressive systems harm others and wound my own soul. The transformative experiences of this internship convince me that, whatever the context of my future ministry, I must seek out cross-cultural and interchurch partnerships with ministers like Rev. Tinsley who can teach me how to be a midwife of hope and justice in the church and community.

*Julia Gingrich is a Master of Divinity student. She lives in Elkhart and attends Prairie Street Mennonite Church.*

Photo at left: Julia Gingrich (right) pictured with Rev. Jennifer Tinsley at St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, Elkhart.

Mike was a lifer in Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert when he signed up for Person-to-Person, a prison visitation program started in 1974 by the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan where visitors come once a month to listen to, talk with and become friends with those in prison.



In the first visits, Mike entered the room with his hat over eyes, mumbled for a bit and that was it. Over time the hat slowly began to rise and the mumbles turned into discussion. He even shared his dream to one day own a house, grow a large garden and have a pet cat.

After Mike was released on parole, he joined our CoSA program (Circles of Support and Accountability for offenders most likely to re-offend). After several years, he bought a small house, tilled the entire back yard and adopted Misty from the local pet shelter.

Three years later, Mike died suddenly from a heart attack as he was preparing for worship at Grace Mennonite Church, the congregation where he was baptized and a member. For the funeral, the congregation filled up with ex-inmates, prison guards, parole officers, coworkers, other CoSA members, volunteers, friends and the congregation.

That evening, and through Mike's redeemed life, we were touched by the Kingdom of God.

*Ryan Siemens, Master of Divinity 2007, is pastor of Grace Mennonite Church, Prince Albert, Sask. He will continue this ministry part-time after January when he also becomes director of the Person-to-Person program.* ●

Photo at left: Mike was a member of the Grace Mennonite congregation, Prince Albert, Sask. This photo was taken a month before his death, the only time he ever wore a tuxedo.

## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

AMBS's Intercultural Competency and Undoing Racism committee leads the seminary toward our vision of making "theological education accessible to and welcoming of Christians of increasingly diverse traditions, ethnicities and races."

Your gifts support this vital mission not only as the seminary works toward this vision, but also as we prepare leaders to minister in increasingly diverse contexts.

All employees recently participated in the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), assessing our capacity to accurately understand and adapt behavior to cultural difference and commonality. Iris deLeón-Hartshorn of Mennonite Church USA and local IDI administrator Darin Short are working with us to help us grow toward greater intercultural competence. Committee members are (back) Safwat Marzouk, Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, Zach Kovitch; (middle) Loren Johns, Nekeisha Alexis-Baker; (front) Bob Rosa and Katerina Friesen. ●

# PANORAMA

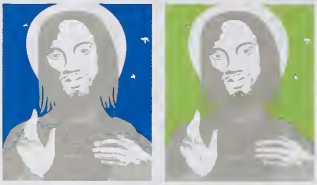
## President reappointed

Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, has been reappointed for another four-year term, 2014–18. This action began with the AMBS board of directors and included actions from Mennonite Church Canada Christian Formation Council and Mennonite Education Agency of Mennonite Church USA.

Bruce Baergen, chair of the AMBS board, said, "After completing a very comprehensive review of Sara's first term we want to celebrate the outstanding work and commitment she has given to and continues to give to the seminary."

## Anabaptist Short Courses

Six-week online courses on congregational conflict and Mennonite polity are scheduled for spring. In addition, a Spanish-language course on Anabaptist history and theology—also six-weeks online—is offered in February and March. Visit **www.ambs.edu/anabaptistshortcourses**



## Pastors Week features 5 faculty

"Help me see Jesus! Help me see, Jesus!" is the theme of **Pastors Week, Jan. 27–30.** Five AMBS professors will focus on Jesus from different points of view:

- Rachel Miller Jacobs, D.Min.;
- Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Ph.D.;
- Safwat Marzouk, Ph.D.;
- Jamie Pitts, Ph.D.;
- Allan Rudy Froese, Ph.D.

Cyneatha Millsaps and Janeen Bertsche Johnson will lead worship times. Information about workshops, teaching sessions, affinity group gatherings and more is available: **www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek**

## Leadership Clinics

Daylong workshops are scheduled for January 27:

- How dare we call ourselves Anabaptist?
- Sex offenders in my church?
- Gathering for new pastors

## Spring online course

**Social Theory for Christian Peacemakers** will be taught online during spring semester. Instructor Gerald Shenk hopes students from many different settings will bring life experience into conversation with the theological convictions and social theory constructs. **www.ambs.edu/academics/social-theory-for-Christian-peacemakers-course.cfm**

## Upcoming events

- Workshop: Lent Planner, Jan. 17
- Webinar: Lent Planning, Feb. 11
- Webinar: Jubilee for Today, March 6
- Webinar: What is your Sermon Doing?, March 20

**www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/index.cfm**

# PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

## SARA WENGER SHENK

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-47).

What a remarkable story. Even a revolutionary story. The birth day of the church. A story and Spirit that keep inspiring us to try radical new church ventures.

And yet we live with this reality: the fastest growing religious preference for adults in the United States and Canada is "no religious preference" and the number of religiously unaffiliated persons has hit an all-time high.

I love the way a non-anxious *Washington Post* columnist describes our time:

> "It's a yeasty time. Christianity is being reinvented. My guess is that it will get smaller for a while. Many churches built in the religious boom years of the past century will close. There will be tensions between experimenters and traditionalists. Denominational loyalty will continue to fade. But fresh ways of blending the old and the new will continue to emerge. And, yet again, an ancient protean faith will find new forms."

It was a yeasty time when there was a sound like a rushing wind and all were filled with the Holy Spirit. Foreigners heard stories about God's marvelous deeds in their own languages. People disagreed about what was happening. Some were amazed. Some perplexed. Others simply sneered.

Peter steps up, as good leaders do, to show how all of God's saving action in the world climaxed in Jesus Christ. It suddenly dawned on people that they'd gotten Jesus all wrong! They were "cut to the heart" saying, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

"Repent, and be baptized … in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The church was born!

AMBS is a "yeasty" community. We devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking bread and the prayers—finding fresh ways daily to blend the old and the new. Thanks be to God for our graduates who step up, as good leaders do, to show the way in Norristown, Boise, Prince Albert, Elkhart and beyond. ●

those duties they held to a strict code of religious purity. And God was the one who chose the priests and Levites for such important roles.

One thing priests and Levites had to avoid was touching a corpse. This would disqualify them from worship duties. They could be reinstated but only after a lengthy purification process.

The situation on Jericho Road is complicated for a priest or Levite. Jesus says the robbers left their victim half-dead. He may well have looked fully dead. A priest or Levite may have wanted to help. Yet to misjudge and touch a dead body would violate God's law and disqualify the minister from serving others in worship. He may have thought, Why dishonor God and be irresponsible to others who are counting on me? Perhaps it was a hard choice, a hard choice between two good ways to serve God and others.

We understand hard choices. A youth sponsor is driving her group to catch the plane for Phoenix. It's a tight schedule to get everyone there, unloaded, checked-in, through security, to the gate. She sees a car broken down and people in distress. Does she stop and help?

The wheat is ready for harvest, and the forecast is for hail and it's Sunday. Is God pleased with the farmer who keeps the combine in the shed, loses his crop and risks impoverishing his family?

Those are hard choices. Maybe the priest and the Levite had a hard choice to make, too.

So the Good Samaritan asked me some new questions: When have I experienced difficult decisions between two good things, even two good things for God? How did I resolve the tension? How did things turn out on the basis of my choice? Would I choose differently the next time? In what areas of life do I struggle with too many choices? Where are my personal hardest choices between good and good?

**Lesson four**

The Good Samaritan encourages me to help others, to overcome prejudices and to be kind to others who face difficult choices.

And here's one last stop on my journey with the Good Samaritan—for now. This lesson comes from a new insight into Jesus' brilliance as a storyteller. I noticed that Jesus receives the lawyer's question ("Who is my neighbor?") and doesn't answer it. Instead, Jesus changes his question to a new question, and through this new question Jesus invites the lawyer to a whole new life.

Jesus makes this change subtly. Essentially the lawyer asks, "Which people should be the receivers of my neighborly actions?" He wants to spend his energy wisely. Jesus' story, however, focuses not on the receiver of neighborliness but on the actors: The priest, the Levite and the Samaritan.

Jesus changes the lawyer's question from Which people should receive my neighborly actions? to, Which one of these—priest, Levite or Samaritan—acted like a neighbor? The lawyer can only answer Jesus' new question, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus says, "Go and do likewise."

The lawyer came to Jesus for a scorecard; he leaves with a role model and a challenge.

The lawyer came to Jesus for a scorecard; he leaves with a role model and a challenge. Jesus says to forget about analyzing who's inside your circle of responsibility. Neighborliness is showing mercy, and mercy has no limits. "Neighbor" is not a service to the worthy so the server can earn maximum points. If somebody's in need, just help. Don't focus on inheriting life; focus on sharing life; do that and inheriting life will take care of itself.

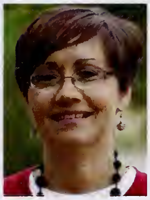
Jesus is brilliant. Through the subtle change in his story, he takes away the lawyer's surveillance camera and hands him a mirror. Jesus also encourages him with an opportunity. As I listen in, Jesus encourages me as well: Don't worry about categorizing the people you meet. Trust the merciful response; that will lead to life.

**Conclusion**

That's four forming lessons the Good Samaritan has offered me—and counting. Jesus' story continues to reverberate with ever-new meanings. And this passage is not unique. The Holy Spirit can use any portion of the Bible to speak fresh words to us, words that spiritually transform us. The Scriptures are indeed wonderful words of life from the God of life.

*David A. Stevens is pastor of Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan.*

# The gift of Advent



**Marty Lehman** of Goshen, Ind., is director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA.

I did not grow up with Advent as part of my Christmas experience. For me as an Amish child, Christmas was nothing like today's consumer-driven celebration. When I think of my childhood Christmas, I think of fewer chores and more free time to play. I think of snow and that warm feeling you get when you come in out of the cold.

Christmas was a time when the family schedule changed and things slowed down. It was a time when we ate oranges, as they were considered a luxury food in our northern Indiana household. We went to Topeka (Ind.) when Santa Claus came to town and were delighted with the free candy he gave us. We spent time with grandparents and extended family. I have many fond memories of Christmas at my maternal grandparents, with all the adults sitting around the room, eating candy, telling jokes and enjoying the day.

**Christmas gifts were not a central part** of my childhood Christmas experience. I still have the two blue glasses I got from my paternal grandmother one year—the only Christmas gift I recall ever getting from her. Gifts from our parents were limited. One year, two of my sisters and I got dolls. These were the only dolls we ever received, and I still have mine today. My younger sister got a school bus. She was most unhappy about her bus, so my parents tried to compensate by getting her a smaller, less expensive doll that she named Mabel. But since this was not the kind of doll my sister wanted, Mabel was often neglected and lived a most unhappy life as a doll. Despite the lack of gifts, I loved Christmas. Christmas was about the fun activities, the food we had only at that time of year and the slower pace of life and time with extended family. It was not about gifts.

Now, as an adult, what I value most about the Christmas season is Advent. I value the anticipation, the waiting, the silence and the music. Advent really is about waiting. Each Sunday we light another candle, and then we wait. We go about our week, knowing what is on our schedule but not really knowing what tomorrow will bring. It gives us time to think beyond this week or even this month. Advent gives us time to ponder the work of God in us and through us.

Today's holiday season is fast paced and hectic. There is shopping, making cookies, decorating the house and the yard, attending parties—and the list goes on. On the news we hear of the importance of Christmas sales and the impact on the economy. It makes us feel guilty if we're not shopping and "helping grow the economy."

**Advent allows us to slow down.** It allows us to sit in silence and hear that still small voice within us. In times of silence we have only ourselves and our thoughts. Silence reminds us of what is bothering us, what needs attention, what needs to be tended to. In her book *Illuminated Life*, Joan Chittister says that silence is "life's greatest teacher. It shows us what we have yet to become and how much we lack to become it." Advent gives us silence.

> Advent allows us time to sit back and sing those traditional songs.

Mainstream American society emphasizes Christmas Day and the New Year's celebrations. We've bundled all this into the "holiday season." Naturally we need gifts and proper clothing for all these holiday events. "Over the river and through the woods" we go in planes, trains and automobiles as we try to meet the demands of our pressing holiday schedules.

Advent allows us time to sit back and sing those traditional songs. We sing them every year, and every year they grow richer in their meaning. We take time to ponder the words of each song and sing them with our whole being. We look for new meaning in each verse and word.

Advent gives us time to meditate on Mary's Song (Luke 1:46-49): "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Advent. The time of anticipation. A time of waiting.

Then Christmas Day comes, and we light the Christ candle. We celebrate the birth of our Savior. TM

# Celebrate new women pastors in Congo

We want to thank Charlie Malembe and Nancy Myers for their excellent article "1,000 Gather in Kinshasa for Ordinations" (November). They communicate well the excitement and the sense of kairos—God's timing—that we were privileged to share as part of the delegation from Mennonite Church USA and its agencies.

We are still in awe of the patience, suffering and faith of our Congolese sisters as they waited for this day. We are also amazed at the humility and willingness to share leadership on the part of the male church leaders. Some of them resisted women's ordinations in the beginning but have now embraced women in leadership and given them their blessing. We met many male pastors who have become convinced that recognizing the pastoral gifts of women is biblical and essential to the church's vitality.

Male pastors leading the Kinshasa ordination service acknowledged this milestone several times and invited all women to consider the door open to church leadership. Sounds of appreciation and celebration could be heard from women and men alike in response to the pastors' words.

Why not me?—Charly Kasha

**A collaborative spirit and solidarity** among women have already started blurring the boundaries between denominations. Ordained women from the other two Congolese Mennonite denominations were present at the ordinations, as well as Methodist and Presbyterian women.

We are fully convinced that God's work in Congo will be strengthened now that the spiritual gifts of women are added to those of men. The giftedness of both women and men are needed to realize God's desire for the way we were created to live on this earth.

One of the most moving moments in our three-week visit to Congo occurred in Tshikapa when the ordained women in our delegation, the two of us and Amanda Rempel, who represented Western District Conference, were invited to join the circle of male pastors in blessing the newly invested pastors. For Sandy, Revelation 7 came to life, with people from diverse tribes and nations gathered around God's throne in worship. For Paula, it was a realization of Galatians 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

We were also privileged to have conversations with the female students at Kalonda Bible Institute. Marie-Louise Chermba Yama from Kabuatu entered seminary last year at age 60. Inspired by the visit of Addie Banks, a pastor from New York who was part of a Mennonite Church USA delegation several years ago, Marie-Louise said that Pastor Banks was a woman like her, with skin the color of hers. "I had been told that I could not be a pastor alongside my husband because I am a woman, but I had hope after I met Addie," Marie-Louise said.

Another student, Thérese Tudiakuile, married and in her 40s, said, "When I saw that the road had opened for women after the vote last year, I came here to study." Her husband and her children were willing to make adjustments to free her for study.

Another Kalonda student, Charly Kasha from Nyanga, 22, a single woman, told us, "Before, there was no place for me in leadership, but now the door has opened, and I said, 'Why not me?' "

**With greater access to theological education** come new challenges. There is no additional housing for women students at Kalonda—and four more women students have enrolled in this fall term. Although the school tries to provide housing for each student, and their family if they are married, all four of the current second-year students live in the one house available to women. Kalonda Bible Institute is working to raise funds to cover this desperate housing shortage.

At the end of our visit with these first-year seminary students, we gathered under a tree to pray. God filled this space. We ended our time together by standing and holding hands as we sang, "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord" (in French and English) as our benediction to each other. When we opened our eyes, we were surrounded by about 400 kids quietly watching us, as if they had a sense of the holy power of the moment. These children will grow up addressing both women and men as "Reverend Pastor" and knowing that God blesses both women and men with the gifts of wisdom and leadership. TM

**Paula Killough** is ordained for ministry as Mennonite Mission Network senior executive for advancement.

**Sandy Miller** is ordained for churchwide ministry as Mennonite Mission Network director of church relations.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

# Mennonite Central Committee sends aid to Philippines

## $50,000 and 10-member team is beginning of long-term response.

Mennonite Central Committee is responding to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, providing funding for relief, supporting an initial assessment team of an MCC partner organization and working with partners to determine needs for longer-term recovery.

MCC is providing an initial $50,000 to Church World Service (CWS), which is working with the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Network, to respond with urgent food and nonfood items. Initially this assistance is focusing on Surigao del Norte and Dinagat Island (both in Mindanao) and on Bohol and Samar (both in Visayas), areas where MCC's partners have access to be able to help.

MCC also is providing funding to Peacebuilders Community, a Mennonite-related agency, to send a 10-member team from Cebu and Mindanao, trained in disaster preparedness, to Leyte Island, an area where thousands of people are believed to have perished.

The team left on Nov. 12, flying to Cebu and then traveling by barge because of transportation challenges. The group will continue by foot if necessary.

Dan and Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi, area directors for MCC's work in Southeast Asia, say that communication has been sketchy, and team members do not know what they will find.

"They will try to go by foot to some of the areas that are not yet accessible by road because of debris, landslides and bridges out," the Jantzis say.

From 2009 to 2012, MCC partnered with Peacebuilders Community to train peace and reconciliation teams in disaster preparedness—a project planned in the Philippines because previous conflicts have arisen amid the severe needs after major disasters.

The Philippines Council of Evangelical Churches has connected Peacebuilders Community with local pastors in the area, and the team plans to help mobilize, train and deploy some 50 volunteers from five churches to help in several affected areas. The goal is that working with local pastors and congregations and using the training the team has had in responding to disasters and distributing assistance systematically and peacefully will help to prevent conflict.

"In a situation like this, training in disaster preparedness gives team members the experience to help communities respond in their own areas," the Jantzis report. "That has more impact than trying to send volunteers from outside the country."

Two of the team members are psychologists with experience in disaster trauma healing work. They will bring training materials and be prepared to work in this area as the need arises.

Bruce Guenther, MCC director of disaster response, stressed that this is the beginning of MCC's response, which will help meet immediate needs and support longer-term recovery.

"There are urgent needs to be addressed now," Guenther says. "At the same time, we want to explore how to support communities' longer-term efforts to restore livelihoods and recover from this devastation."

To donate to this effort, please go to mcc.org/typhoon-response.—*Marla Pierson Lester for Mennonite Central Committee*

Typhoon Haiyan battered the Philippines, including this area of Eastern Samar. MCC is responding through partners. Learn more at mcc.org/typhoon-response.

ACT Alliance/Christian Aid photo

# 30 Mennonites at World Council of Churches assembly

## Council calls for churches' commitment to peace, rights of indigenous people.

James R. Krabill

The Teatro Ekyumenikal, the assembly worship drama team from the Philippines, performs at World Council of Churches assembly.

Churches can lead communities in resolving conflicts by launching a "pilgrimage of justice and peace," says the World Council of Churches (WCC). This invitation for member churches to journey together in seeking God's peace was the heart of the closing message of the organization's 10th annual assembly held in Busan, Republic of South Korea, Oct. 28-Nov. 4. Thirty Mennonites from eight countries were among the more than 3,500 participants. The theme of the assembly was "God of life, lead us to justice and peace."

James R. Krabill, senior executive for Global Ministries for Mennonite Mission Network, attended the assembly as a representative of Mennonite Church USA. Sarah Thompson of Christian Peacemaker Teams attended as part of an international gathering of young theologians.

Assembly activities included worship services, workshops, Bible studies in various languages, and visits to local churches. There were also two meetings among about 60 representatives of the historic peace churches (Mennonites, Quakers and the Church of the Brethren), Krabill says.

"When we go to a conference of this nature and meet Christians committed to working for God's shalom—justice and peace—we need to be at the table because we have a theology to share with people who are working at the same issues," Krabill says.

Formed in 1948, the WCC includes Protestant and Orthodox churches that came together after the horrors of World War II. With a deep desire for churches to be agents of peace, the first founding assembly affirmed that "war is contrary to the will of God." More recently, the WCC initiated the "Decade to Overcome Violence," which has explored the framework of "just peace."

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the WCC currently has 345 member churches. These churches across the globe make up about 25 percent of the world's Christian population. Mennonite World Conference is comprised of 100 entities, of which three Mennonite churches from Germany, Holland and the Congo are also members of the WCC. Mennonite Church USA is not a member of the WCC (or the National Council of Churches in the United States) but has sent guest participants to WCC assemblies.

"We want to be in relationship and conversation with this part of the body of Christ, as well as other parts of God's family," says André Gingerich Stoner, director of Interchurch Relations for Mennonite Church USA. "Mennonites are one small but important part of the body of Christ. We have gifts to receive and gifts to share as we seek to be faithful witnesses to Jesus. It is important to be at the table together."

"We cannot be reconciled in the abstract but only to real people who may have values and convictions we often find difficult to stomach," says Stanley W. Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network. "If we are to know them beyond the stereotypes and get the nuances that characterize their beliefs, it is critical that we stay engaged."

Other statements issued by the WCC during the assembly include a renewed emphasis on mission and evangelism in changing landscapes, support for the rights of indigenous people, and a statement on the way to a just peace.—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

James R. Krabill

The Teatro Ekyumenikal was the World Council of Churches assembly worship drama team in Busan, South Korea.

# Ohio seeds symbolize growth of Mongolian church

## Known Christians in Mongolia grow from five in 1993 to over 50,000 today.

Andrew Bodden

Laura Schlabach, a long-term worker with Mennonite Mission Network in Mongolia, speaks at the Mongolia Mission Partnership banquet in Ohio.

With each cup of corn kernels poured into a glass bowl, audience members witnessed a visual illustration of what their commitment to mission in Mongolia had produced over the years—from just five known Christians in 1993 to more than 50,000 today.

The symbolic gesture was one of many key moments during the Mongolia Mission Partnership banquet on Oct. 19. More than 200 people gathered for the event at the Carlisle Inn in Walnut Creek, Ohio.

**Among them were most of the past** and recent mission workers who served in Mongolia over the past 20 years.

Laura Schlabach, who in 1993 became the first to be supported by the Ohio churches, traveled from Mongolia to attend the event. Schlabach joined the staff of JCS (Joint Christian Services) International, which provides service projects to people throughout Mongolia.

The nongovernmental umbrella organization coordinates the ministries of mission agencies.

Stanley W. Green, Mission Network's executive director, and John F. Lapp, director for Asia and Middle East, presented Schlabach, the JCS representative for Bayanhongor, with a certificate of appreciation for her career-long service as an administrator.

"'We acknowledge that you have made a contribution that inspires all of us to give our lives to the cause of Jesus Christ," Green said.

**In keeping with the evening's symbolism** and celebratory mood, banquet co-hosts Myron Weaver, pastor of Berlin (Ohio) Mennonite Church, and Dean Heisey, church relations associate with Mission Network, performed skits that included their contrasting attires.

Weaver sported a plaid blue shirt and farmer's overalls, while Heisey donned a tuxedo.

The co-hosts honored the congregations, leadership team members and all the mission workers for their commitment.

"Together, these folks represent 61 years of service in Mongolia," Weaver said of the mission workers as they stood before the audience and received applause. "Tonight we say thank you."

Mission Network's Work in Progress Ensemble led the gathering in a rendition of "Blessed Assurance" to honor the mission workers. Schlabach helped the audience say "Jesus loves me" in Mongolian—"Yeh-soos nahdud herte."

Weaver concluded the banquet by leading participants in the pouring of kernels of corn into a glass bowl to represent the growth of the church in Mongolia.

More than 20 years ago, Mennonite Board of Missions (a predecessor agency of Mission Network) and Eastern Mennonite Missions began exploring ministry in Mongolia. Meanwhile, the Ohio churches were seeking ways to work together more closely.

The Mongolia Mission Partnership provides church members with hands-on experience to overseas mission.

In addition to offering financial support and prayer, 51 members of the six remaining supporting Ohio congregations have visited Mongolia to foster relationships and to work on short-term projects.

For more stories and information about the Mongolia Mission Partnership, check out the October issue of *Beyond Ourselves*.

Mennonite Mission Network, the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA, leads, mobilizes and equips the church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world.—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

# New building empowers community

## Toba-Qom people construct space for community education, Bible study.

Photo provided

From left: Francisco Marcial, son; Ricardo Marcial, father and a preacher with the Iglesia Evangélica Unida (United Evangelical Church); and Sebastián Marcial, grandson. Three generations of the Marcial family help construct a building for the Instituto Biblico Toba-Qom (Toba-Qom Bible Institute) in Castelli, Argentina.

After seven years of offering classes in churches, the Instituto Bíblico Toba-Qom (Toba-Qom Bible Institute) in Castelli, Argentina, will soon have their own space.

Supported by Mennonite Mission Network, the institute offers leadership development training and deeper biblical understanding for Toba-Qom people in and around the towns of Castelli and Miraflores, located in the Chaco region of Argentina.

**The new building for the group in Castelli** will have a room for the institute's classes and community-led workshops, a radio station and a recording studio for musicians from Toba-Qom churches.

"This project will open new opportunities for our people," says Francisco Marcial, a musician and student who helped construct the building. "We've never had a recording studio or our own FM radio station. This place will be a gathering place for lots of people: making radio programs, recording their music, studying the word of God. It gives our community strength and energy."

Construction started in 2012 and has proceeded with funds from local donors, from the provincial government, and from Sonnenberg and Pike Mennonite churches in Ohio.

The institute paid community members who had construction experience to build the structure up to the roof. At that point, community volunteers added the roof.

"The idea [to build the classroom] came from conversations with Toba-Qom people about getting an independent space for our vision," says José Oyanguren, an international partnership associate with Mennonite Mission Network whose family is sent by Bragado Mennonite Church to serve in the region. "Our faith alone inspired us, because we didn't have anything else."

**For many years, the group of Mennonite** Mission Network workers and associates in the Argentine Chaco, called the Mennonite team, sought culturally appropriate and structured ways to respond to a need for leadership development.

In 2007, Oyanguren and Toba-Qom leaders developed the Bible institute that focused on keeping students within their communities, used indigenous teachers and operated mostly from student contributions.

Now that the institute is well established and has 50 students enrolled, the leaders want it to have its own building that could also function as a community space to support education and cultural expression.

The radio station and recording studio included in the new building will give the Toba-Qom people access to communication media that weren't easily available before.

Oyanguren says the institute also hopes to host in the building an accelerated high-school program for adults aged 18 and older. Already, 80 people have signed up for the program. Since the new building currently has only one classroom, Oyanguren will send a proposal to the government to fund more classrooms, bathrooms and a kitchen to make the space more comfortable.

Continued church and local donations of funds and raw materials move the building closer to completion. Now that the walls and roof are built, the institute will work on construction as funds are available.

Energy from this construction project spurred the formation of the community-led Centro Educativo Qom Sayaten (Qom Knowledge Educational Center) that has the motto "Ca ayaten yañoxot" (Knowledge empowers).

The center will share the space with the institute and will offer cultural strengthening, language preservation and Christian ethical formation.

"I hope [the center] is a blessing for many," says Marcial. "It gives us power and strength as we move forward." —*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Andean women pastor each other

## Around 50 women receive training on 'caring for ourselves and others.'

Daniela Velásquez

Women from several Andean countries participate in a session of "Caring for ourselves and each other among women," facilitated by Carolyn Holderread Heggen and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht.

Forty-nine women pastors and leaders met in Cachipay, Colombia, Aug. 7-10 to receive training on the theme of "Caring for ourselves and each other among women"—also known as "Sister Care."

The event was part of the Anabaptist Women Theologians Movement of Latin America (MTAL) and brought together women of the Andean region: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, along with some from Argentina and the United States. The training was facilitated by Carolyn Holderread Heggen and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA. Sister Care is a ministry of Mennonite Women USA.

**Soto Albrecht shared that many leaders** give and give but often do not stop and care for themselves. This workshop "became a time in which we pastored each other, walked with each other and modeled what confidentiality and trust looks like in cultures where it is very hard to trust."

The workshop began with an analysis of the Colombian context and its implications for the Andean region, and participants shared about the toll that 60 years of war has had on their country, their community and their families. Time was given each day for personal reflection and profound internal work and for sharing in community and supporting each other in sorrows and joys.

This gathering was a small step of joining forces, to listen to and respect each other in regard to our faith.—Daniela Velásquez

Many women were able to journey toward healing in this community. "God was there very much, present and tangible through the love of these sisters and the openness of our spirits," says Soto Albrecht. "It was a privilege to be able to see and hear from sisters, with tears and profound conviction, that they were able to claim profound healing in those areas of their lives."

This diverse group, with differing theological positions, was also able to dialogue about controversial issues the church faces.

Daniela Velásquez of Peru, one of the youngest participants at the event, was greatly impacted by the way they were able to learn in the midst of these differences.

"We were able to hear the opinions and ideas of each person and learn to live with these views that differ from our own in an atmosphere of respect and without imposing on others," says Velásquez. "In this way this gathering was a small step of joining forces, to listen to and respect each other in regard to our faith."

Decisions were also made regarding the future of the Anabaptist women theologians' movement in this region. A new facilitation team for the Andean Zone was elected, with a new model of coordination between two women, Martha Lucía Gómez, a pastor, and Zaraí Gonzalía, the executive administrator of the Seminario Bíblico Menonita de Colombia, the Mennonite Biblical Seminary of Colombia. They will be accompanied for the first year by outgoing coordinator Alix Lozano.—*Kristina Toews of Mennonite World Conference*

Mennonite Women USA

Martha Gomez (left) and Zarai Gonzalia were elected to be the new facilitation team for the Andean Zone of the Anabaptist Women Theologians Movement of Latin America.

# Sister Care shared globally

## Seminars for women move beyond United States to Asia, Latin America, Africa.

Rhoda Keener

Manjula Raul (left) with Carolyn Holderread Heggen at the All-India Mennonite Women conference in Orissa, India.

What began as a seminar for women in the United States has now been shared in Asia and Latin America, with additional invitations received from Kenya and Trinidad.

Sister Care is a Mennonite Women USA-sponsored program that equips women to continue their own healing journey, to identify God's grace in their lives and to walk with others in compassionate ways.

The Sister Care manual was developed by Carolyn Holderread Heggen, psychotherapist and teacher, and Rhoda Keener and Ruth Lapp Guengerich, Mennonite Women USA co-directors. The manual is available in English and Spanish. About 2,500 women have attended the workshops; 500 from outside the United States.

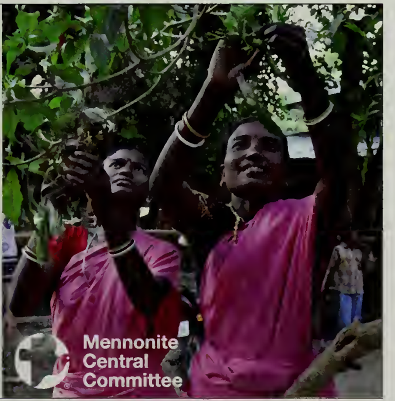
**In the past year, the Sister Care seminar** has been shared in the following places: the All-India Mennonite Women conference in Orissa, India; Tansen and Kathmandu, Nepal; Guatemala City; Chihuahua, Mexico; and Bogotá, Colombia. A workshop was scheduled for Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in November.

Olga Piedrasanta of Guatemala reflects: "One of the major problems for women in the churches is their life context, which may include domestic violence, poverty and urban violence—which affects family, church and jobs. Women need to help one another become stronger rather than to be mired in these difficulties."

Ofelia Garcia of Mexico and Piedrasanta received training in Guatemala to lead the workshop in Chihuahua, with women from various conferences and cultures, including Hispanic, Germanic and Tarahumara indigenous.

This workshop in Chihuahua took place five months after the assassination of pastor Josefina (Chepina) Rempening Diaz in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico, and helped heal the pain. The sessions about loss touched the women deeply. They felt both the loss of a pastor and the loss of their sense of security. "Since Chepina's death I had not cried and talked like today. Thank you. It is very healing," commented one participant.

Following the workshops in Guatemala and Colombia, participants from 12 countries took 1,500 manuals home to their congregations and communities and are leading workshops. Phyllis Groff, Eastern Mennonite Missions worker in Guatemala, is translating the manual into Kekchi.—*Mennonite Women USA*



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Mennonite Central Committee

# The two-handed tea

## Stories at Christian-Muslim peacemaking banquet

Tammy Evans

From left: Grace Shenk serves tea to Angelica Prins, Carol Bornman, Jonathan Bornman, Andres Prins and David Shenk during a reenactment of an African tea ceremony.

Eastern Mennonite Missions' 2013 mission vision banquet, titled "The Two-Handed Tea," featured stories of peacemaking among Muslims from EMM's Christian-Muslim Relations Team. Some 500 people listened to team members Jonathan Bornman, Andres Prins and David Shenk, along with Shenk's wife, Grace, tell stories at the Lancaster (Pa.) County Convention Center on Nov. 1. Andres Prins talked about visiting a local mosque with Brian Miller in Lancaster, Pa., where they met with the leader of the mosque and shared a time of warm hospitality together.

"I explained we were there as disciples of Jesus and as Mennonites," Prins said. "We are commanded to work for peace and mutual understanding and to bless those around us."

Jonathan Bornman shared about his April trip to the Congo. In Lubumbashi, where there had been almost no previous interaction between Christian and Muslim leaders, he went with local Mennonite pastors to visit Muslim leaders in the community.

Grace Shenk started the evening by introducing a reenactment of an African tea ceremony on the convention center stage. While Doris Dellinger narrated, Grace and David Shenk, in native African attire, acted in the roles of an African couple who were greeting guests to their home. Andres and Angelica Prins and Jonathan and Carol Bornman portrayed guests who had come to call on the Shenks.

"Sharing tea and being hospitable are very important parts of African culture," Shenk. "Young women or girls in the family provide a basin for guests to wash their hands, and tea is often served with a treat. So a two-handed tea means you may have a cup of tea in one hand and a cookie in the other."—*Linda Moffett of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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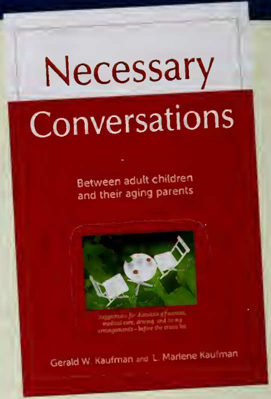
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# Syrian villages welcome return of aid

## Mennonite Central Committee appeals to U.N. on behalf of 3,000 Syrian families.

After opposition forces overtook the Syrian villages of Haffar and Sadad on Oct. 28, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) appealed to the United Nations to make it possible for humanitarian aid to reach the estimated 3,000 Syrian families endangered there.

A week later, access has been restored, report Doug and Naomi Enns, MCC representatives based in Beirut, Lebanon, and working in Lebanon and Syria.

Since the Syrian civil war began in 2011, Sadad and Haffar had been relatively safe places, where many Syrians sought refuge after being displaced by violence in other parts of the country. After the takeover, civilians were killed and injured as opposition forces used the villages as a base to fight government forces. Houses and cars were confiscated and movement of supplies and people in and out of the area severely restricted.

"I could hear children cry in fear of the situation," says Riad Jarjour, president of the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD), describing an Oct. 22 phone call with his brother in Haffar. "I could hear the faint sounds of the barrage of mortars and intense fighting raging outside. As I sat by the phone, I could not but cry with them."

FARZAT
FARZAT

Photo provided

Earlier this year, these men unloaded in a Syrian town boxes of oil that were used as part of food packages distributed in Syria. They are unnamed for their security.

MCC works through Syrian partner organizations to provide humanitarian assistance throughout Syria based on need. In these historically Christian villages, where Muslims and Christians live peacefully together, MCC provides food and educational assistance.

Jarjour and Bishop Selwanos of the Syrian Orthodox Church in nearby Homs, another MCC partner, appealed to MCC to advocate with the U.N. to negotiate safe passage for the Red Crescent to reach the wounded and safe evacuation of affected families in Haffar and Sadad.

Doug Hostetter, director of the MCC United Nations Office, took their message to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Oct 23. It was welcomed, Hostetter says, and shared with OCHA in the Middle East. MCC advocates in Ottawa and Washington also talked to government officials about the situation.

MCC's request was in line with an Oct. 2 U.N. Security Council Presidential Statement, Hostetter says, which includes this sentence: "The Security Council calls on all parties to respect the U.N. Guiding principles of humanitarian emergency assistance and stresses the importance of such assistance being delivered on the basis of need, devoid of any political prejudices and aims."

On Oct. 28, Jarjour and the Ennses thanked all those who had prayed and invited continued prayers for Haffar and Sadad and for partners in the area.—*Linda Espenshade of Mennonite Central Committee*

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# MDS dedicates homes on Sandy anniversary

## Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers repaired over 35 homes, rebuilt two.

MDS

Ruth Fountain on the porch of her Mennonite Disaster Service-built home in Crisfield, Md.

It's been a long year of wondering and then waiting, but two Crisfield, Md., residents are moving back home. A year after Hurricane Sandy pummeled the East Coast, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers celebrated with Charlie Adams and Ruth Fountain as they dedicated homes for both Crisfield residents.

MDS volunteers have been working in Crisfield since November 2012, first cleaning up and now rebuilding; bringing storm survivors home.

When Hurricane Sandy hit, a five-foot storm surge inundated Crisfield and left virtually the entire town underwater.

Working together with Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response, The American Red Cross, the Diocese of Easton Episcopal Churches and the Somerset County Long-Term Recovery Committee, MDS volunteers have repaired over 35 homes and rebuilt two new homes, have two homes underway and have several additional new homes planned.

MDS volunteers at projects in New York are also repairing and rebuilding homes that were damaged by Hurricane Sandy.—*Mennonite Disaster Service*

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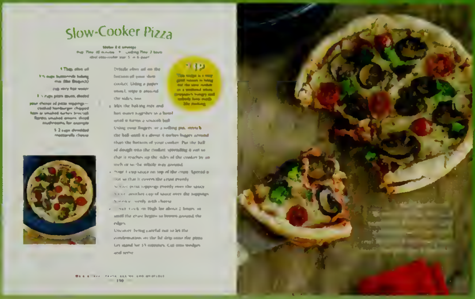
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# Empowering women in Afghanistan

## MEDA project sees thousands of women raise vegetables and increase earnings.

A public forum on "Empowering Women in Afghanistan" was held in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 22, jointly sponsored by the Anabaptist Peace Center of Washington and Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA). The event took place in the Howard Zinn room at Busboys and Poets, a restaurant chain in Washington that promotes world peace and provides the locale for various justice events in the Washington community.

Suraja Sadeed, a graduate of Eastern Mennonite University Center for Peacebuilding, Harrisonburg, Va., and now a doctoral student at George Mason University, spoke of her efforts in providing humanitarian aid, medical care, education and hope against seemingly insurmountable odds in some of the most inhospitable conditions imaginable. Her work has directly benefited nearly 2 million Afghan children and their families. She has been honored for her efforts at the highest levels of government in both the United States and Afghanistan. She was recognized by President George Bush and First Lady Laura Bush at the White House in 2006 and has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show, which itself resulted in a $1 million grant from Oprah for the work in Afghanistan.

**As a person born and raised in Afghanistan** herself, she knows the importance of working through the men in a male-dominated society. Help the Afghan Children has trained teachers in Afghanistan and has helped Afghan women understand their rights to be educated in an extremely complex and difficult social situation. There are still at least 10 million land mines left in the country from the wars of the past, dating back at least 30 years. Students are taught how to recognize and disarm them.

Helen Loftin, vice president of Economic Opportunities for youth and women at MEDA, has directly managed several women's economic development programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan. She was based in Pakistan for two and a half years. Since 2010, Loftin has led MEDA's women's economic empowerment work in Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, Ghana, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Haiti and Libya.

**Loftin also underscored** the necessity of "working through men to help both men and women" in Afghanistan. Women in rural areas of Afghanistan live their lives behind mud walls surrounding their homes, but there are ways of working with them and for them by gaining the acceptance of the all-male village councils. MEDA's Through the Garden Gate project saw thousands of women raise vegetables and increase their earnings from zero to $350 on average, per year, making a huge difference in family income. Some women earn thousands per year as a result of the project.

Both speakers emphasized that meaningful change will not come quickly in Afghanistan, where 78 percent of people cannot read or write. There are huge disparities between rural and urban populations within the country. One-third of young Afghan men are without jobs, and per capita annual income is about $900.—*Mennonite Economic Development Associates*

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# Hess appears on *Jeopardy!*

## Melanie Hess places second on the show that aired Oct. 25.

Photo provided

Alex Trebek, host of *Jeopardy!*, with Melanie Hess. Hess appeared on *Jeopardy!* in September, and the show aired on Oct. 25.

When Melanie Hess took the online test to qualify for *Jeopardy!*, she had no idea that months later she would be a contestant on the show in Los Angeles.

"My then-finance, now husband, Travis, encouraged me to take the online test," she says. "I figured I'd done OK but not as good as others, so I kind of forgot about it."

Hess was shocked when she received a call in July from a *Jeopardy!* producer inviting her be a contestant. The show with Hess as a contestant aired on Oct. 25. Her taping date was Sept. 11—just 10 days before her wedding.

Prior to the call from the producer, she received an email in May inviting her to audition in New York City. She took the train and spent a few hours in the Beacon Hotel conference room, where she played a practice round and completed a paper test of 50 questions.

Hess placed second and went home with $2,000. The Final *Jeopardy!* question was in the European Literature category: "This 1922 novel's first chapter is titled 'The Son of Brahman.'" That show's winner was the only one with the correct answer: Siddhartha.

Hess is "kicking herself" about that question.

"I've heard of Siddartha, and I knew it was by Hermann Hesse, so it makes sense that it falls in the category of European Literature," she says. "But there was no way I was going to think of it."

Hess, who earned $10,200 at the time of the final question, wagered $4,900 on the Siddartha question.

She was surprised she knew the Australian Rules Football answer. The question was: "Oi, ya can kick it 'round as a good left back pocket—that's a position, mate—in this 3-word sport."

She watched the show on Oct. 25 at her home with Travis, and some friends stopped by. "It was fun to watch with them, as I was able to say, 'Oh! Here's where this happened' and, 'Oooh, I get this right.' " she says.

"The key to *Jeopardy!* is absolutely the buzzer," she says. "You can't ring in until Alex finishes reading the question and these little lights go on. If you ring in too soon, you're locked out for quarter-second, which gives everyone an advantage over you. Finding a buzzer rhythm that works is crucial, because you have to get the timing exactly right. I'd get the answer in my head before he was done and then position my hand to ring it as fast and furiously as possible, but I never really found a good way to know when to ring in."

Hess worked for Mennonite Mission Network as a marketing writer from 2009 to last March. She now works as a technical writer for Parsons Brinckerhoff. Hess is a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. She and Travis live in Lancaster.—*Anna Groff*

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# White spiritual and racial formation: three conversions

## Miller Shearer: Institutional pattern is crisis, contrition and relapse.

I've come to believe three conversions are necessary for white people in the Christian community. A deeper understanding of these conversions can support our common reflection during the kairos moment now calling us to new action in the face of racial injustice.

These reflections grow from my immersion in academic, activist and spiritual formation disciplines over the course of the last two decades. I am grateful for the gifts of wisdom and insight from mentors, both white people and people of color, who have taught and challenged me. I write also from my experience as a highly privileged white male academic, a Mennonite by choice and family tradition, and a child of God.

While there are essential conversations that have long been taking place in the church about spiritual and racial formation among communities of color, I offer these comments specifically to other white people. I suggest that our collective path of spiritual formation involves three distinct but interconnected conversions.

**Racism is not dead**: The first conversion asks us to recognize that racism is not dead. Although we need to continue to examine our past engagement with Native American/indigenous peoples, African Americans, Latino/as, and members of the Asian community, we cannot afford to suggest that racism is no longer with us. As made plain through the experience of immigrants in Arizona and the summer trial of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, overt racism continues to oppress people of color. Ongoing racial disparities in access to education, health care, employment and housing make evident that racism is present, recurrent and systemically maintained. To unequivocally affirm testimonies about racism from our sisters and brothers in the church is a spiritual and emotional struggle for many of us white people. Our privilege often blinds us to the daily experience confronted by people of color.

To unequivocally affirm testimonies about racism from our sisters and brothers in the church is a spiritual and emotional struggle for many of us white people. Our privilege often blinds us to the daily experience confronted by people of color.

Back in 1955, when the murder of Emmett Till called for prophetic response, white Mennonites were ill prepared to take action. Although leaders in the 1930s and 1940s—such as James and Rowena Lark and David Castillo—had broadened church membership outside Germanic/Swiss/Russian communities, many white Mennonites viewed Till's murder as an anomaly, a southern problem and an issue separate from the church's mission.

Despite the courageous efforts of those who called the church to pass a statement on race relations that same year ("The Way of Christian Love in Race Relations," 1955, Guy F. Hershberger, et. al.), the bulk of the white Mennonite church and the broader Christian community had not yet gone through this first conversion.

In the early 1990s, I remember administrators who censored an article I had written describing acts of racism in the Mennonite community. They refused to release it because they felt it would be too controversial. That we can now have frank and open conversations about racism in the church is a significant step forward that should be both acknowledged and celebrated. At the same time, I do not know if we have collectively moved through this first conversion a half century later. But I am hopeful that fewer of us in the white community deny the contemporary reality of racism.

**Power and privilege:** The second conversion calls us to recognize that the purpose of racism is to provide white people with power and privilege. Rather than a social force that only harms people of color, racism ensures that white people receive access to the benefits and opportunities that white skin affords, what Peggy McIntosh has described as an "invisible backpack" in her classic essay ("White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack," 1989). These privileges include freedom from harassment, opportunity for enrichment, access to employment, and support for cultural norms regarding time, beauty and worship style—the latter of particular importance to the Mennonite community as we seek to embody missional values. At the same time, gender, class, sexual orientation and physical ability modify white privilege in complex and ever changing ways.

Although prophetic leaders in the church, such as Vincent and Rosemarie Harding, Lynford Hershey, John Powell, Gracie Torres and others, identified white privilege and power in the church during the 1960s and early 1970s, their witness frequently fell on deaf ears. It is no accident that many of them left the church, having been alienated and ostracized. Given the willingness of some contemporary white church leaders to heed voices of people of color and take seriously the reality of white privilege, I am again hopeful that this second conversion may gain wider purchase.

**Shapes us who are white**: The third conversion asks us to come to terms with the profound and unacknowledged ways that white power and privilege shape us who are white. In terms of our spiritual formation, it is difficult to learn to be dependent on God when the systems and institutions within this country affirm, encourage and sustain us. In the process, our spirituality often becomes weakened.

In those times and places where white privilege reigns supreme, we fail to exercise our dependence on God's grace. Likewise, the unacknowledged receipt of white power and privilege can create a sense of entitlement, hamper authentic interracial relationships and warp our self-assessment. White privilege also erodes the Anabaptist value of *Gelassenheit*—yieldedness to God's will. It is difficult to learn to yield to the leading of the Spirit and to practice authentic humility when we are conditioned to expect power and privilege.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the white church, like much of the broader white society, withdrew from the intense conversations about race that had opened up in the 1960s. Although some, such as Hubert Brown, Joy Lovett, Hubert Swartzentruber and others, continued to address the church's racial identity, discussions about white power and privilege seldom surfaced in the church's official publications. For the better part of the last 20 years, antiracist activists in the church have initiated dialogue about the effects of white power and privilege. I can only hope this third conversion, invariably the most spiritually and emotionally demanding of the three I outline, will gain wider purchase in the coming months and years.

These three conversions are intimately connected to crises in the church. As is the case with white people in general, we have a tendency to focus on our racial identity—our "whiteness"—only in times of crisis (for a more detailed examination of this idea, see my essay "Conflicting Identities: White Racial Formation Among Mennonites, 1960-1985," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 19 no. 3 [2012]: 268-284"). This linkage between crisis and identity suggests that we who are white have an additional challenge to pay attention to racial issues in general and to our racial identity in particular when people of color around us are not forcing us to do so.

**Patterns in crises:** In my historical work, I have noted a pattern of crisis, contrition and relapse that has recurred in numerous church agencies, from Mennonite Central Committee to Mennonite Mission Network and in most of our educational institutions of higher learning. An unjust job termination, biased personnel policy, public epithet or other overt act of racism triggers a racial crisis. Institutional leaders turn their attention to it and, in most cases after a period of denial and obfuscation, express contrition. In some instances changes at the level of personnel or policy may occur, but the status quo then reappears and, with time, relapse takes place.

Such a pattern has been at least partially arrested in some of our institutions through a costly, faithful process of collective tripartite conversion, as described above. Movement through such a process is often built on the recognition, as our sisters and brothers in the conflict transformation movement remind us, that conflict and crisis are not only normal but, in the case of antiracism work, welcome.

Of course, those committed to antiracism and antioppression work need to bring much wisdom and integrity to crisis invitation. Otherwise, we can become cynical and manipulative, in the process replicating the very misuse of power that we claim to stand against. I find myself drawn again and again to prayer as a means of staying centered in the midst of racially induced crises.

The language of conversion carries its own history of coercion within our religious community. By invoking it, I do not mean to support emotionally abusive altar calls. An orientation toward invitation, reflection and conviction that comes to us from the practice of spiritual direction represent my use of conversion as an about face, a new identity and a commitment to take new action.

As we move forward on our spiritual journeys, both individually and collectively, we in the white community will be better positioned to practice authentic humility, grounded action and prophetic witness to ongoing racial injustice and the many other forms of oppression present in our world. Movement through these opportunities for spiritual renewal and conviction will result in a more attractive community to those seeking a message of hope and an answer to the twisted policies that have resulted in a country that does not welcome immigrants and allows the murderer of a young black boy to go free.

I have noted a pattern of crisis, contrition and relapse that has recurred in numerous church agencies. … Institutional leaders turn their attention to it and, in most cases, after a period of denial and obfuscation, express contrition.

Ideas for action:

- Join efforts in your community to organize to overturn Stand Your Ground laws and sentencing guidelines that have disproportionate influence on people of color. For action resources, see the materials developed by Showing up for Racial Justice: www.showingupforracialjustice.org/archives/1765.

- Use the resources of the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and to support the End Racial Profiling Act of 2013 (S. 1038/HR. 2581). The act seeks to prohibit racial profiling by law enforcement agencies and officials on federal, state, local and indigenous levels. This bill also proposes a federal law enforcement training on racial profiling issues, a data collection/investigation on racial profiling issued by the Attorney General (which is to be made available to the public), as well as grants to fund the data collection and other antiracial profiling measures. See: http://washington.mcc.org.
- Sponsor an antiracism discussion group in your congregation, using resources provided by the Racial Healing Task Group of Mennonite Church USA. For more information, contact Joanna Shenk: joannas@mennoniteusa.org.
- Contribute to groups such as Roots of Justice, an anti-oppression training organization that sponsors Damascus Road and Fire and Clay trainings: http://rootsofjusticetraining.org/.—*At the University of Montana, Tobin Miller Shearer is an associate professor in the history department and director of African-American studies.*

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# Students explore nonviolent peacemaking

## Six Bluffton University students attend MCC U.N. Student Seminar.

Interested in exploring nonviolent peacekeeping methods, six Bluffton (Ohio) University students attended the Mennonite Central Committee United Nations Student Seminar in New York City Oct. 23-25.

Held at the MCC U.N. office across the street from U.N. headquarters, this year's conference focused on U.N. peacekeeping work—done with armed soldiers as peacekeepers—and on unarmed/nonviolent efforts such as Nonviolent Peaceforce and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Cincin Akanya, a Bluffton senior from Nigeria, noted her prior understanding of peacekeeping as always solving violence with violence. "I've been enlightened," she says, "because MCC focuses on holistic healing and not just individual healing."

Seeing a war on education in northern Nigeria, Akanya wondered if there was another way to resolve the conflict.

"We just want peace now, and that's been through war, but it is not working," she says. After attending the seminar, Akanya suggested informing her generation about nonviolent actions, like mediation, as a step in the right direction.

Katie Conrad, a junior from New Carlisle, Ohio, and Southside Mennonite Church in Springfield, Ohio, has been familiar with MCC. During the seminar, she was exposed to the option of a nonviolent, armed military overseen by the UN.

Conrad considered peacekeeping on two different levels: person-to-person through grassroots organizations and systematically through international law and policies. "Both are effective methods, and both are needed to resolve conflicts," she says. While the U.N. sends armed forces to help resolve conflict, Akanya adds that she "loved that MCC took the extra step to help those involved in traumatic events with therapeutic sessions after conflicts were resolved."

Both agreed that MCC often gives voice to those who do not have a voice in conflict situations.

Emily Kolezynski, a junior from Strongsville, Ohio; Nnenna Onwukeme, a senior from Nigeria; Luz Varela, a junior from Goshen, Ind.; and Kiera Fenwick, a junior from St. Marys, Ohio, also attended the conference under the supervision of Paul Neufeld Weaver, an associate professor of education at Bluffton. Bluffton students have attended the conference for 18 years. Several campus organizations helped fund this year's group, including Student Senate, Women's Council and the Pi Delta society.—*Alexandria Ferland of Bluffton University*

Photo provided

Cincin Akanya (in red), a Bluffton (Ohio) University senior from Nigeria, speaks to a group including Bluffton junior Nnenna Onwukeme (in blue), also from Nigeria, at the MCC UN Student Seminar.

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## CALENDAR

April 3-4, 2014: **Fairlawn Haven Auxiliary Open House & Auction**, Founder's Hall, Archbold, Ohio.

## WORKERS

**Eberly, Matthew**, was installed as lead pastor at Shiloh Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., on Oct. 16.

**Hess, Jay**, was licensed as associate pastor at Byerland Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa., on Oct. 20.

**Kolb, Bradley**, was licensed as youth pastor at Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Harrisonburg, Va., on Sept. 15.

**Satvedi, Valentina**, was ordained at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., and her credentials transferred from Pacific SW Conference of the Church of the Brethren Church on Sept. 11.

**Sharp, Don**, was installed as intentional interim pastor at Rossmere Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 20.

## OBITUARIES

**Belousek, Lydia Clare Snyder**, Lima, Ohio, was stillborn on Sept. 3. Parents: Darrin W. and Paula J. Snyder Belousek. Funeral: Sept. 7 at Salem Mennonite Church, Elida, Ohio.

**Brandt, Robert H.**, 88, Baltic, Ohio, died March 30. Spouse: Lovina Troyer Brandt. Parents: Herman A. and Ella A. Fischer Brandt. Children: Kathy A. Cerman, Robert H. II, Daniel J., Steven C.; six grandchildren; one step-grandson; four great-grandchildren; five step-great-grand-children. Funeral: April 4 at Walnut Creek (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

**Brown, Robert Carl**, 80, Bluffton, Ohio, died Oct. 12. Parents: Harry C. and Winifred Ruby Harman Brown. Children: Kathy Kempf, Linda Brown; two grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 16 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Burkholder, Miriam Thomas**, 82, Lititz, Pa., died Oct. 3. Spouse: Paul G. Burkholder. Parents: Amos Harnish and Martha Myer Thomas. Children: Judy Stoltzfus, Glenn, Renee Swartley, Marilyn Brandenburg, James, Kevin; 16 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 19 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

**Funk, Katharina Klassen Stoesz**, 100, Altona, Manitoba, died Oct. 20. Spouse: Diedrich P. Funk (deceased). Spouse: David H. Harder Stoesz (deceased). Parents: Peter J. and Anna Dueck Klassen. Children: Katharina Dyck, Helena Dueck, David Stoesz, Erdman, Arthur, Wilbert, Evelyn Penner; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 26 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

**Gascho, Glen A.**, 92, Cairo, Neb., died Oct. 13. Spouse: Delores Schweitzer Gascho. Children: Barbara Loy, Kathy Anderson, Dave, Glenda Beckler, Ginny Landers; 14 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 17 at First Baptist Church, Cairo.

**Gingerich, Beryl J.**, 91, Lowville, N.Y., died Sept. 29. Spouse: Eunice Zehr Gingerich. Spouse: Marian Jantzi Gingerich (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Barbara Lehman Gingerich. Children: Samuel, Pierre, Jane Lehman, Florine Purcell, Barbara Baker, Janelle Corn; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Oct. 3 at Lowville (N.Y.) Mennonite Church.

**Gisel, Carolyn Fay Rufenacht**, 75, Archbold, Ohio, died Sept. 23, of an aneurysm. Spouse: Merle Gisel (deceased). Parents: Glen and Laura Grieser Rufenacht. Children: Cedric, Lincoln; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Goering, Janet June Reinbolt**, 78, Hudson, Mich., died Sept. 4. Spouse: Gene Goering. Parents: Charles Michael and Mary Kathryn Hartley Reinbolt. Children: Michelle Gnagey, Gene Jr., Jana Wheeler, Kristi Hiltbrunner; 17 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 9 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

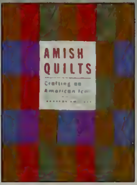
**Harnish, Margaret Irene Shriner**, 99, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 14. Spouse: Earl W. Hartman (deceased). Parents: Frank and Katie Miller Shriner. Children: Donald, Dennis; three grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 17 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**Martens, Rudy**, 87, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 19. Spouse: Elvina Neufeld Martens (deceased). Parents: Cornelius and Elizabeth Suderman Martens. Children: Elizabeth Claassen, John, Philip; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Oct. 26 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Miller, Betty Lou Eicher**, 69, Grabill, Ind., died Oct. 27. Spouse: Kenneth Miller. Parents: Joe and Emma Eicher. Children: Jay, Rodney; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 31 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

**Nafziger, Lester R.**, 96, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 19. Spouse: Marjorie Nafziger (deceased). Parents: William and Ruth Frey Nafziger. Children: Leslie, Suzanne Schrock, Karen Rupp, Thomas, Mike, Lonnie; 14 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 23 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.



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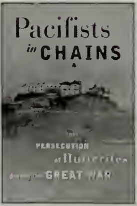

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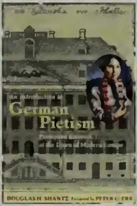

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**Nofziger, Marvin D.**, 85, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 16. Spouse: Mary Ellen Grieser Nofziger. Parents: Willis and Lillie Short Nofziger. Children: Joel, Kristina Miller, Sara Mast; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 1 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Powell, Dorothy Mae Baer**, 84, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 14. Spouse: Samuel James Powell, Jr. (deceased). Parents: Jacob Elton and Esther Hahn Baer Burkholder. Children: Patrcia Tiller, Samuel Powell III, Linda Sheets, David Powell; eight children; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct, 18 at Powhatan Mennonite Church, Powhatan, Va.

**Schantz, John Dale**, 85, Albany, Ore., died Aug. 19. Spouse: Marjorie Wittrig Schantz. Parents: Peter Jr. and Barbara Detweiler Schantz. Children: Roger, Charles, Nancy Schantz; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Memorial service: Aug. 22 at Albany Mennonite Church.

**Schroth, Bertha Jane Peachey**, 88, Rochester, N.Y., died Oct. 22. Spouse: Fred Schroth (deceased). Parents: Jeptha and Mary Peachey. Funeral: Oct. 25 at First Presbyterian Church, Caledonia, N.Y.

**Stutzman, Dortha J. Yoder**,98, Wellman, Iowa, died Oct. 20. Spouse: Ammon Stutzman (deceased). Parents: Jephtha and Mary Kauffman Yoder. Children: Dale, Fern Harbage, Twila Claeys, Neva Frey; foster daughter: Josephine Frost; 14 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 23 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman.

**Yoder, Alvin D.**, 90, Belleville, Pa., died Oct. 20. Spouse: A. Margaret Yoder. Parents: Daniel A. and Fannie Sharp Yoder. Children: Wanda J. Bender, Stanley A., Brenda F. Shoop, Sandra M. Newman, Nelson E., Barbara E. McCrea, Debra L. Yoder; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; five step-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 23 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

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## RESOURCES

**Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites During the Great War** by Duane C.S. Stoltzfus (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $29.95) documents the disturbing history of four pacifists imprisoned for their refusal to serve during World War I. Stoltzfus, who teaches at Goshen (Ind.) College, explores the tension between a country preparing to enter a world war and a people whose history of martyrdom for their pacifist beliefs goes back to their 16th-century beginnings. Stoltzfus' article "Standing in Chains at Alcatraz," based on this research, appeared in our August 2012 issue.

**A Family Affair** by Ruth Naylor (Finishing Line Press, 2013, $14 plus $2.49 for shipping) is a collection of poems whose subject matter is Naylor's own family relationships, though the poems express a universal experience.

**Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction** by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen (BakerAcademic, 2013, $22.99) is an introductory textbook that offers a comprehensive narrative of philosophical thought from a distinctly Christian perspective.

**Rhythms of Poverty: Reconsidering Our Affluent Approach to the Poor** by Murray Nickel (2013) outlines stages of compassion we commonly move through and addresses the disappointment we feel when projects don't go as planned. Nickel's experiences led him to a healthier conception of compassion, which he summarizes in three foundational virtues: justice, mercy and humility. Order from nickel.murray@gmail.com.

**The Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an: Three Books, Two Cities, One Tale** by Anton Wessels (Eerdmans, 2013, $28) argues that Jews, Christians and Muslims must read their Scriptures *together* and not *against* each other.

**The Ox-Herder and the Good Shepherd: Finding Christ on the Buddha's Path** by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2013, $15) shows how a work from a 12th-century Chinese Zen master known as the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures trace a universally recognizable path of contemplative spirituality. Hart explores how this ancient Buddhist parable can enrich and illumine the Christian way.

**Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation** by Peggy Gish (Cascade Books, 2013, $28) draws on stories of Iraqis to show what war and the U.S. government's antiterrorism policies have meant. Gish conveys the efforts of Iraqis speaking out against injustices and building movements of nonviolence and reconciliation.

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**Sunnyslope Mennonite Church,** a well-established urban congregation in Phoenix, Ariz., has an immediate opening for a **lead pastor**. For information, contact Dick Davis at 909-243-5003, email dickdavis@pacificsouthwest.org.

**James Street Mennonite Church**, Lancaster, Pa., seeks a **half-time pastor**. The position gives leadership to the congregation's holistic Christian witness, including hospitality, local outreach, global missions, and peace and justice ministries. Responsibilities also include joining the pastoral team in preaching, teaching, etc. Contact Pastor Stan at sshantz@jsmchurch.org or visit www.jsmchurch.org for the job description.

**Erisman Mennonite Church** of Manheim, Pa., a semirural congregation of 175 members, is seeking a **lead pastor**. This person will serve with a leadership team and have preaching and administrative responsibilities. An interest in youth and young adult ministries is desirable. Submit MLI and cover letter to Bishop Carl Horning at chorning@gmail.com.

Country living at its best near Shipshewana, Ind. **17 acres available in Amish Country**. 12 acres cleared ready to build and plant, 5 acres wooded. Spring fed creek runs through property. Contact: **myronyoder@aol.com**.

**Pigeon River Mennonite Church**, Pigeon, Mich., is seeking a **full-time senior pastor** to lead our congregation (average weekly attendance of 210) as we seek to maintain our strong faith heritage while reaching out to the surrounding community. Please submit a resumé or requests for information to Lee Gascho at lgascho@gmail.com.

**Little Eden Camp**, Onekama, Mich., is seeking a **full-time food service director** to manage its kitchen operations. Responsibilities include administration of the kitchen and its staff, menu planning, ordering and food preparation. Five years cooking and management experience preferred. Experience in Christian ministry/camping helpful. admin@littleeden.org

**Camp Friedenswald**, Cassopolis Mich., supported by Central District Conference, is seeking a visionary, motivated leader to serve full-time as **executive director**. Responsibilities include (1) overseeing operations, (2) staffing and programming, (3) aptitude for fund-raising. Qualifications include strong skills in communication, public relations, organization and experience in fund-raising. Send resumés with references to Phoebe Graber at pwgraber@gmail.com.

**Bethel Mennonite Church** in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is inviting applications for a **full-time lead pastor** to commence in summer 2014. We are seeking a person with a strong Anabaptist theology as well as ability to engage the congregation through worship and preaching. This person will have strong administrative skills and be able to work with and lead a multimember pastoral team. Our desire is that the successful candidate, along with the pastoral team, can enable and nurture the gifts of the congregation in order to enhance the overall mission of the church. Pastoral experience along with a Master of Divinity degree or equivalent is preferred. Please send resumés to jbpeters@shaw.ca or contact Jake Peters at 204-889-5094 for information. For more about Bethel Mennonite Church see: http://bethelmennonite.ca.

**Lombard Mennonite Church** seeks a **full-time lead pastor** with a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology and skills in preaching, leadership, spirituality, teaching and congregational care. Requirements: M.Div. degree (or equivalent), pastoral experience (prefer urban or suburban setting), and demonstrated experience in managing church staff. International experience a plus. LMC is a member of the Illinois Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. We are a vibrant Anabaptist congregation in the western suburbs of Chicago whose members come from diverse Christian backgrounds. Position open Aug. 1, 2014. Interested persons should contact the Illinois Conference associate minister, Roland Kuhl, at rgkuhl@mennonite.net.

**Biblical Turkey** April 28-May 10, 2014. Istanbul, Ankara, Cappadocia, Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Troas, Churches of Revelation, Troy, more. Cost from D.C. $2,996. Led by Ed Bontrager and Richard/Jewel Showalter. www.travelventuretours.com, 540-438-8304 eebontrager@comcast.net

**Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust** protects and maintains the historic 1770 Germantown Mennonite Meetinghouse (Philadelphia), site of the first permanent Mennonite settlement in North America. We seek candidates with a connection to Mennonite history and community to build relationships and engage the public with the Germantown story. We have **two open part-time positions** whose responsibilities together will include executive leadership and vision, program development, administrative operations, development and fund-raising, communication and awareness-building, and landlord responsibilities. On-campus housing options available. More information is available at www.meetinghouse.info. Starting date is April 2014, with flexibility. Send cover letter and resumé to Dave Hersh, k3lkn@aol.com.

**Iowa Mennonite School** is seeking a dynamic, qualified educational leader for the position of **principal/chief administrator** in rural Kalona, Iowa, for the 2014-2015 school year. All job descriptions and applications may be viewed at the IMS website at http://www.iowamennonite.org/about/job-opening.

# Beautiful mess

**Sherah-Leigh Gerber** attends Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church and is coordinator of volunteers for Ohio Conference. She lives in Apple Creek, Ohio, with her husband and two young children.

We are called to attend to these beautiful messes—whether our own or those of others.

A beautiful mess is the title I would give my attempt to make applesauce this year. The only logical explanation for why I would undertake processing two bushels of apples with the help of my infant son and toddler daughter is that I'm optimistic (or that I have caved under the pressure to have Instagram-able moments of motherhood).

However, it is exactly that kind of crazy optimism that led to a truly beautiful mess (at moments near disaster). As I tried to recover from my wrong turn on the way to the orchard, I staved off meltdowns by singing the children's songs I had rehearsed with my sisters on the many road trips we took growing up. As the sweet little toddler voice sang strong, "Jesus loves me, this I know," I was overcome by the beauty of that message and the preciousness of an emerging faith understanding—things I would have missed if I had just turned up the radio to cover the crying.

**I had to bite my tongue** to keep from yelling as water from her full sink sloshed onto the floor. "I helping with dishes," Anna declared proudly. It really was beautiful—the three of us lined up along the counter: her washing the freezer boxes, me working at the colander, the baby giggling from his high chair. A beautiful moment I would have missed if I had allowed my frustration with mess or the slow pace of the project to take root.

There was mess: in the burnt-on peels of the pot of apples boiling too long as I tried to nurse between tasks, the cut on my thumb from dancing around with the baby in the backpack while coring apples, and the pinch in my right shoulder from the weight of balancing an interested toddler while stirring, pouring, mashing and scooping.

There was also beauty: in the sweet pink sauce, delicious and warm with our supper, the squeal of excitement for Daddy when he came in the door—his proud helper sharing the details of our day—and the satisfaction of a task accomplished.

Does not life often end up being a beautiful mess? We optimistically try to accomplish things on our own or feverishly work, thinking the final product is the prize when really God is calling us to attend to the beauty and joy amid our work.

Young adulthood, in particular, can often feel like a string of beautiful messes—trying to establish yourself in all areas of life, stumbling from one experience into a new opportunity or being stranded in threshold times of possibility in which you hold everything and nothing at once.

As I find my way between being a "young adult" and being "middle aged," I realize these threshold experiences are universal. Whether it's high school graduation, the start of a new career, sending your last child to college, starting a new career midlife or retiring after 40 years of service to an organization, we all face moments (sometimes extended) of liminal time in which we embrace possibility with nothing concrete.

**Human nature may urge one** to rush through the doorway, to push forward into the "next," but the way of the Spirit is often not that of hurry or ease. Instead it is a call to savor liminal time. God invites us to take a moment and patiently stand at the threshold—calling us to be (perhaps crazily) optimistic, dreaming big and trusting in the Spirit's ability to do more than we could ask or imagine. It can be exhilarating to stand on the threshold of something new and unknown. It can be equally terrifying. Often it is both, just as our world shows us beauty and mess at every turn.

I sense we are called to attend to these beautiful messes—whether our own or those of others. It may be a small mess in the kitchen, the consequences of our own choices. Or we may find ourselves in a disaster over which we have little or no control—a bitter career disappointment, a lost relationship or a life-altering diagnosis.

The beauty may be fleeting or hidden, but it is our choice to find the beauty amid a mess of disappointment or taste the sweet rewards of a task completed, even if it's not to the standard we envision. I pray that we have the courage to step to the threshold time and again, willing to have crazy optimism despite what the world may say. And may we be gracious with others as they search for the beautiful in their mess. TM

## FILM REVIEWS

**12 Years a Slave** (R) tells the true story of Solomon Northup, a free black man from upstate New York who was abducted and sold into slavery in 1841. This powerful, unflinching depiction of slavery is difficult but necessary to watch. It shows the horror and evil of this long-standing American practice. Thus far, this is the best film of the year.—*Gordon Houser*

**All Is Lost** (PG-13) is the gripping account of a sailor whose 39-foot yacht takes on water after a collision with a shipping container at sea. With his navigation equipment and radio disabled, the man sails unknowingly into the path of a violent storm. Despite his resourcefulness, he must face his mortality. Robert Redford gives a remarkable performance and helps us as viewers imagine our mortality.—*gh*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision Is Key to the World's Future** by David P. Gushee (Eerdmans, 2013, $35) seeks to rescue the ancient moral conviction that every human life is sacred "before it is completely discredited by the politics of the moment." Gushee thoroughly examines the sacredness of human life in the Old and New Testament and early Christianity. He looks at how the church has failed to uphold this conviction and at the many challenges to it up to the present. He goes on to argue for the sacredness of all God's creation and that such sacredness is not only a moral reality but a moral task.—*gh*

**The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology** by Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney (BakerAcademic, 2013, $19.99) seeks to address the imbalance of much theology that sees Jesus as "a Savior who suffers *for* us but not *with* us." At the same time the authors warn against "identifying Christ with anyone who suffers." It's a Calvinist conversation but has insights for us all.—*gh*

# Many rivers to cross

An important and gripping documentary series is playing on PBS stations. *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* is a six-hour series that chronicles African-American history, from the origins of slavery on the African continent through more than four centuries of remarkable events up to the present.

Presented and written by Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr., the series draws on some of America's top historians and heretofore untapped primary sources. Though a scholar, Gates brings a personal dimension to the series, identifying with the subjects, since he is one.

The first episode, "The Black Atlantic (1500-1800)," explores the global experiences that created the African-American people. Beginning a century before the first documented "20-and-odd" slaves who arrived at Jamestown, Va., the episode portrays the earliest Africans, slave and free, who arrived on these shores.

The second episode, "The Age of Slavery (1800-1860)," illustrates how black lives changed dramatically in the aftermath of the American Revolution. For free black people, these years were a time of opportunity, but for most African Americans, the era represented a new nadir.

The third episode, "Into the Fire (1861-1896)," examines the most tumultuous and consequential period in African-American history: the Civil War and the end of slavery, and Reconstruction's thrilling but brief "moment in the sun." From the beginning, African Americans were agents of their liberation—by fleeing the plantations and taking up arms to serve in the U.S. Colored Troops.

The fourth episode, "Making a Way Out of No Way (1897-1940)," portrays the Jim Crow era, when African Americans struggled to build their own worlds within the harsh, narrow confines of segregation. At the turn of the 20th century, a steady stream of African Americans left the South, fleeing the threat of racial violence and searching for opportunities in the North and West.

The final two episodes, "Rise! (1940-1968)" and "A More Perfect Union (1968-2013)," are aired on Nov. 19 and 26. Viewers can access the series at pbs.org.

This narrative is one most of us never heard in school. Beyond the broad outlines of history we may know, here we encounter many stories of individuals and details that expand our understanding of the extreme trials African Americans faced and overcame.

One historian points out that when our country was formed, slavery was assumed because the nation couldn't exist without it. Slaves built much of the infrastructure of the United States, including roads and buildings, such as the White House and the Capitol.

There were many uprisings by slaves, not just that of Nat Turner. And when the Civil War began, a half million slaves ran away.

Of the 950,000 deaths in the Civil War, 40,000 were African Americans.

African Americans influenced much of our culture, including food and music.

We learn about figures unknown to many of us. Ida B. Wells, co-owner and editor of a black newspaper in Memphis, attacked the evils of lynching in her newspaper, risking her own life. By 1900, there were three lynchings per week in the South. She called lynching "an instrument of terror."

This series is well-worth watching and discussing. We have much to learn from this history. TM

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of* The Mennonite.

*(Continued from page 5)*

punished enough and hope that another public airing will be helpful. Unfortunately, as a friend of the family, what I see is renewed suffering for them with no possibility of punishing John Howard himself. Now that the issue has been brought forward again, could we not find ways of assisting these women toward healing in a less public forum and allow healing for the Yoder family, too?—*Kristen Long, Arvada, Colo.*

**What to do about Yoder?**

What to do about John Howard Yoder? As a young boy I heard unkind jokes about the brilliant young professor with the "odd" behavior, John Howard Yoder. A decade or so later the thought came to me that John's situation was not funny. I stopped telling JHY jokes. I only knew him from a distance, even as a student at the seminary in the late '70s and early '80s. But he always seemed to be sad and lonely, living in an isolated world. I did not suspect any of the abuse happening at that time.

The current discussion about Yoder is perhaps missing one important element. I'm not making a diagnosis. I'm not excusing his behavior, but this is something to be considered.

Hans Asperger first described a condition later known as Asperger's Syndrome. His work did not become well known until the '80s and became an official diagnosis in the '90s. The latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders has dropped the Asperger's "diagnosis" in favor of "Autism Spectrum Disorder."

I taught special education and have worked with agencies providing services for people with autism and other special needs since the late 1960s. I taught people diagnosed with autism; my wife and I provided adult foster care for a severely autistic woman for about a decade, our foster daughter is diagnosed with "autism spectrum disorder" and a grandson is diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. We have also heard and read life stories of people dealing with high-functioning autism.

People on the high end of the autism spectrum have many of the characteristics John Howard Yoder displayed; included, most strikingly, is his high intellect and brilliant scholarship alongside his tragically abusive behaviors and social isolation. The fact that "he was difficult to manage" would come as no surprise for someone with high-functioning Autism Disorder. I have no idea whether he was ever diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome; but I doubt it since Asperger's Syndrome became an actual diagnosis only in the '90s. It can be difficult to diagnose if there is no one close who is familiar with the syndrome, and few medical people had expertise in this specialty area in the '90s.—*Dan Steiner, Goshen, Ind.*

**Also outside the box**

I appreciated Becca J. R. Lachman's well-written, thought-provoking article "Outside the Box" (October) because I live with the same question she posed, How can a Mennonite survive without community? Her response affirms my growing experience that the community of Christ thrives in many places and that an Anabaptist Mennonite voice is valued and desired far beyond our traditional communities. While I treasure the many years I lived and worked in a center of the Mennonite denomination, I am refreshed weekly by the passionate engagement with Scripture and profound commitment to justice of my new family of faith. It helps, too, that they sing heartily in worship.

Would I love it if there were a Mennonite congregation nearby? Of course. I often find myself praying for my former congregation and other Mennonite churches in the region. At the same time, my sense of call to this community deepens as I watch for and respond to the Spirit's surprising invitations in this place. Like Lachman, I, too, "feel more Anabaptist today than at any other point of my life."—*Marlene Kropf, Port Townsend, Wash.*

**We need a place for dialogue**

I welcome Ethan Bodnaruk's Opinion piece (October) responding with dialogue about homosexuality to my February Opinion piece calling for such dialogue. Ethan presents many considerations that can lead our church to relax its stance against same-sex sex. They are ones that gain immediate traction for many in our church, resonating with deeply held values; so he does the church a service in articulating them, even though they may contain unexamined assumptions.

As I indicated in a comment on the online version of Ethan's piece, I pray that one day our denominational leaders will host some sort of an "open source" or wikipedia-type website where these points of view—and the thoughtful, constructive responses to them—could be gathered in the interest of clarity and understanding and examination and discernment.—*Harold Miller, Broadway Va.*

**Consistent Life ad too simplistic**

I find the endorsements in the Consistent Life ad (November) puzzling. Although I agree with most of the general concepts, all the No's seem simplistic, absolute, authoritarian and are perhaps the legalism that drives thoughtful people from church doctrine.

For example, "No abortion." How about to save the life of the mother or the rape of a 12-year-old?

It would be ideal if there were no need for this No, but until reality is addressed (i.e. responsibility for dealing with one's testosterone, respecting equality and independence of all), the "no abortion" slogan could do more ultimate harm than good to the individuals involved—as well as society.

How many endorsers would be lost with an ad citing specifics on "No sex outside marriage" or "No unplanned/unwanted parenthood"?

If one were to address each No item listed, significant inconsistency could be said about most generalized items listed if one were to apply it to the real world of the sick, old, dying, poor, life-imprisoned, abused, as well as rich. —*Donna Neufeld, North Newton, Kan.*

# God sighting at SpringHaven

*Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.*—Psalm 85:10 TNIV

I have a deep appreciation for the many counseling centers that are affiliated with Mennonite Church USA because I recognize how much they contribute to our church's vision to bring healing and hope to individuals in our communities, both inside and outside the church.

Not long ago, in the course of my travels for Mennonite Church USA, I had the opportunity to visit SpringHaven, a counseling center with two locations in rural Ohio—Mount Eaton and Crown Hill. Their motto is "Compassionately Leading People Toward Wholeness."

I first heard about SpringHaven from Terry Shue, a charter member of the governing board. He spoke about the joy he experienced when the ministry was launched, and the pleasure it brought him to serve on the board. As he described the unusual events that led to the establishment of the center, he gave credit to God for what had happened.

Terry said the alignment of Lavina Miller Weaver's leadership as the CEO with that of Steve Steiner as the board chair was a clear movement of God at work. They both have great credibility in their communities and worked tirelessly to catch up to what God was doing to provide a local mental health facility. The way things came together was a clear signal to Terry that God was at the center of the whole initiative. The board was confident that God was leading the way.

**As with other counseling centers,** clients come to SpringHaven with concerns such as depression, anxiety, grief and loss, phobias, disorders, sexual abuse recovery, marriage and relationship issues, behavior and eating disorders, adoption and attachment disorders and more. The staff provides counseling for individuals, marriages and families, as well as groups that can help in the healing journey.

Yet SpringHaven stands out from most other counseling centers in that it ministers to the "Plain community" in a significant way, which constitutes about one-third of its clientele. The leaders of the nearby Amish churches gave their blessing and their financial support to the launch of the building project at the main location. Now the Amish contribute a significant amount of volunteer time, supplies and meals to Amish clients who are under care. The Amish churches in the area share responsibility for maintaining Amish living quarters at the center and make regular visits to their church members there. Executive director Lavina Weaver and other counselors are able to communicate with their Amish clients in Pennsylvania Dutch, a practice that bridges communication barriers and builds trust across cultural divides.

**SpringHaven is unusual** in yet another way: It was started via a merger of several different ministries that developed a common vision for improving the mental health in their community. That made it possible for the ministry to get started without a debt. The surrounding community rallied around the vision and helped them upgrade an existing facility into a spacious and welcoming place under open skies with a vista of rolling hills. The horses in the equine-psychotherapy program seem right at home among the fields and pastures of the neighboring Amish community.

It seems appropriate to provide equine-assisted therapy to Amish clients who work with livestock every day. Horses are sensitive animals that readily detect a person's emotional state, helping individuals understand the effects of their emotional state on others. Under the guidance of skilled therapists, interaction with horses can help clients develop skills of patience, self-confidence, trust and compassion.

The God of peace invites us all to make healthy choices among the stresses and strains of life, which leads us to true shalom. True peace is a kissing cousin to righteousness, expressing "right-relatedness" with God and each other. So when I see people walking the path toward greater mental health, I look for God's footprints nearby. They were easy to spot at SpringHaven.

**Ervin Stutzman** is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

When I see people walking the path toward greater mental health, I look for God's footprints nearby.

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FROM THE EDITOR

# God's body

Everett J. Thomas

*Look, the virgin shall conceive*
*and bear a son,*
*and they shall name him*
*Emmanuel.*—Matthew 1:23

The infant lying in the manger is God's body. That's what "Emmanuel" means. The Hebrew word is, literally, "God with us." The Isaiah prophecy quoted by Matthew is also specific that God will be with us as a son. But we seldom consider the meaning of sonship in the Ancient Near Eastern world into which Jesus was born.

In that time and culture, a man's "essence" continued to live on in his son, especially a firstborn son. That is why it was such a big deal that Abraham had no son. It meant that his line would stop and there would be no trace of him in the world. This was so important to Abraham and Sarah that they conceived a work-around. Sarah told Abraham to take her servant, Hagar, and father a son through her. So this is how Ishmael came into the world and was to represent the "essence" of Abraham for all eternity.

In the Ancient Near Eastern world, a man's 'essence' continued to live on in his son, especially a firstborn son.

But when Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son, suddenly the boy Ishmael was a threat to Isaac. There could be only one son to carry Abraham into the future. So Hagar and Ishmael were driven away. We know that in Islam much more was written about their lives than we have in our biblical record. And this is how Abraham became the father of not just one faith but three—Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

At Christmas time, when we again hear the story of Jesus' Nativity, imagine that infant lying in a manger as the essence of God wrapped in swaddling clothes. This is a phenomenon almost too big to imagine: The all-powerful, all-loving Creator of the universe was embodied in that tiny little boy, the essence of God.

The phrase "son of God" is never used in the Old Testament. But 41 times the writers of the New Testament books use it to describe Jesus. By doing so, their readers understood the "sonship" dynamic between Jahweh God and Jesus the Messiah. Conversely, when Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer, he was using code language for "our Father" that carried with it the same organic and essence connection between a father and a firstborn son.

In a church that increasingly neuters the language of masculine references in order to be inclusive, we miss the powerful relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. But at Christmas time, we can celebrate the birth of God's "only begotten son," who came into the world because our Father so loved us. Or, as Gordon Houser says (page 12): "When you dig through the consumerist clutter that Christmas has become, you get to a startling belief: at a point in real history, God became a baby."—*ejt*

## Thanks, Dee

Dee Birkey, freelance designer for *The Mennonite* since 2005, is leaving this position at the end of 2013. After a search this summer for a new freelance designer, we selected Mary Jo Veurink from Broadway, Va., to succeed Dee. Mary Jo will design our January 2014 issue, with Dee providing some counsel during December.

During her tenure with us, Dee has been a wonderful partner. She understands Mennonite Church USA and our readers—something that Mary Jo will also bring. Dee also led the redesign process in 2009 that gave us the template we have used for the last four years. She has been generous with her time and occasionally donates some of her work to *The Mennonite.*

Dee, we wish you all the best as you move on and can say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."—The Mennonite staff

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